MEMORIED FLESH: SHOCK AND TRAUMA IN LATE NINETEENTH-CENTURY RUSSIAN FICTION

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation focuses on representations of nervous shock and trauma in nineteenth-century Russian literature, with special focus on the works by Fedor Dostoevsky and Anton Chekhov. The current genealogy of trauma relies heavily on the work of Sigmund Freud and of subsequent scholars and is often retrospectively imported into analyses of nineteenth-century literary texts. In contrast, the author of this study relies on a two-directional interpretive move, in which both nineteenth-century theories and present-day scholarship are put into a mutually elucidating dialog, leading to previously unexplored interpretive avenues. Furthermore, the author asserts that literary analysis serves as a useful tool for this genealogical project, because both nineteenth-century fiction and the period's sciences of the mind were part of a broad intellectual milieu, wherein fiction's nuanced exploration of its characters' psyches opened new avenues of psychological inquiry for the mental sciences. Ultimately, the author demonstrates that nineteenth-century nervous shock, unlike present-day trauma, is overwhelmingly chronic (as opposed to acute) and physiological (as opposed to psychogenic) in nature, with pathology primarily originating in the nervous system. Furthermore, whereas with trauma, emphasis is placed on the role of the brain and ultimately on narrativization for potential healing, with shock, intervention is overwhelmingly physiological in nature and does not necessarily involve the direct participation of the brain. Instead, injury, its transmission to future generations, as well as healing can all take place purely on the level of the body, without the direct involvement of consciousness and the brain.

DEDICATION

To my Mother, Liliia, for giving me life.

To my Grandmother, Anna, for giving me roots.

To my Husband, Christopher, for blooming together.

To Faina Liliana, may there be future fruit.

To John and Patricia, for witnessing.

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INTRODUCTION

An article that originally appeared on the *Indian Country Today* media network at the end of May of this year (2015) made what seemed like a very bold announcement, conveyed explicitly in its title: "Trauma May Be Woven into the DNA of Native Americans." The author then proceeded to an equally provocative opening:

> Trauma is big news these days. Mainstream media is full of stories about the dramatic improvements allowing science to see more clearly how trauma affects our bodies, minds and even our genes. Much of the coverage hails the scientific connection between trauma and illness as a breakthrough for modern medicine. *The next breakthrough will be how trauma affects our offspring.*[1]

The article points out that, unlike the sensational trauma-related media coverage of the 1990s, which often focused on questions surrounding the legitimacy of recovered memory, present-day coverage focuses primarily on the effects of chronic trauma on our bodies, as well as its consequences for future generations. Both the article's title and the emphasized last sentence of the passage refer to the relatively new, yet rapidly growing, scientific field of epigenetics. Meaning literally "above the gene," epigenetics focuses on the study of cellular and physiological trait variations that do not result from a change in one's genetic sequence. Put simply, the field investigates the way external, environmental factors influence gene expression,

[1] Mary Annette Pember, "Trauma May Be Woven into the DNA of Native Americans," *Indian Country Today,* May 28, 2015, accessed July 1, 2015, paragraph 1, http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/05/28/trauma-may-be-woven-dna-native-americans-160508; reprinted as "Suicide and Trauma May Be Woven into the DNA for Native Americans," *Huffington Post,* June 8, 2015, accessed July 1, 2015, paragraph 1, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mary-annette-pember/suicide-native-americans_b_7520490.html.

without changing the DNA genome itself. To use a computer analogy: if one's genome is the "hard drive" that stays the same, the epigenome (comprised largely of various methyl groups and histones) is the "software" that switches genes on and off, telling the "hardware" what to do. The various changes in the epigenome, we now know, can sometimes be passed on to subsequent generations.

Although epigenetics has been part of the scientific landscape since the 1970s, it has recently gained more visibility in both the scientific and public arenas. Whereas early discoveries of transgenerational transmission of epigenetic changes focused largely on organisms relatively low on the evolutionary scale — like bacteria and plants, for example — starting with the early 1990s, the field began questioning its applicability to humans. The latter investigations now include studies on intergenerational epigenetic effects of Dutch famine,[2] health-related effects of alternating patterns of plentiful harvests and famines in Sweden,[3] and altered stress hormones in descendants of Holocaust survivors,[4] to name but a few.

A neuroscientific study based out of Emory University and published in the journal *Nature Neuroscience* back in 2014, however, opened the door to a whole new level of public

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[2] Rebecca C. Painter, Tessa J. Roseboom, and Otto P. Bleker, "Prenatal Exposure to the Dutch Famine and Disease in Later Life: An Overview," *Reproductive Toxicology* 22:3 (2005), 345–52; Mve Veenendaal et al., "Transgenerational Effects of Prenatal Exposure to the 1944–45 Dutch Famine," *BJOG: An International Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology* 120:5 (2013), 548–54.

[3] M. Lalande, "Parental Imprinting and Human Disease," *Annual Review of Genetics* 30 (1996), 173–95; Marcus E. Pembrey et al., "Sex-Specific, Male-Line Transgenerational Responses in Humans," *European Journal of Human Genetics* 14:2 (2006), 159–66.

[4] Rachel Yehuda et al., "Maternal Exposure to the Holocaust and Health Complaints in Offspring," *Disease Markers* 30:2/3 (2011), 133–39; Rachel Yehuda et al., "Influences of Maternal and Paternal PTSD on Epigenetic Regulation of the Glucocorticoid Receptor Gene in Holocaust Survivor Offspring," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 171:8 (2014), 872–80.

attention for the field. Among other things, the study involved a series of experiments with mice, in which a specific smell (cherry blossom) was paired with repeated electrical shocks to the animals. The scientists eventually concluded that a single "traumatic memory" was physically passed on to subsequent generations of mice, who experienced the same conditioned fearful responses to the smell as previous generations, without direct exposure to the shocks. In the lead investigators' own words, their findings provided "a framework for addressing how environmental information may be inherited transgenerationally at behavioral, neuroanatomical and epigenetic levels."[5] In layman's terms, the study implied that traumatic experiences of our ancestors could leave a bodily (neuroanatomical and epigenetic) imprint that could in turn be transmitted to us, with the capacity to influence our behavior.

A slew of subsequent articles in popular media outlets — ranging from *The Scientific American* and *Discovery* to *Huffington Post, Washington Post,* and the BBC, among others — followed in the wake of the study.[6] Various articles written from the perspectives (and for the

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[5] Brian G. Dias and Kerry J. Ressler, "Parental Olfactory Experience Influences Behavior and Neural Structure in Subsequent Generations," *Nature Neuroscience* 17:1 (2014), 89.

[6] Tony Rodriguez, "Descendants of Holocaust Survivors Have Altered Stress Hormones," *The Scientific American,* February 12, 2015, accessed July 1, 2015, http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/descendants-of-holocaust-survivors-have-altered-stress-hormones; Dan Hurley, "Grandma's Experiences Leave Epigenetic Mark on Your Genes," *Discovery Magazine,* June 25, 2015, accessed July 1, 2015, http://discovermagazine.com/2013/may/13-grandmas-experiences-leave-epigenetic-mark-on-your-genes; Darron T. Smith, "The Epigenetics of Being Black and Feeling Blue: Understanding African American Vulnerability to Disease," *The Huffington Post,* January 23, 2014), accessed July 1, 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/darron-t-smith-phd/the-epigenetics-of-being-_b_4094226.html; Meeri Kim, "Study Finds That Fear Can Travel Quickly through Generations of Mice DNA," *The Washington Post,* December 7, 2013, accessed July 1, 2015, http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/study-finds-that-fear-can-travel-quickly-through-generations-of-mice-dna/2013/12/07/94dc97f2-5e8e-11e3-bc56-c6ca94801fac_story.html; "The Ghost in Your Genes," *BBC Nature,* September 24, 2014, accessed July 1, 2015, http://www.bbc.co.uk/sn/tvradio/programmes/horizon/ghostgenes.shtml.

benefit) of groups who historically had experienced mass violence and trauma began addressing the implications of physically inherited "traumatic memories," often invoking the metaphoric language of ghosts and spectrality.[7] A piece for the "Black Voices" section of the *Huffington Post* drew conclusions representative of the messages in similar articles, including the one mentioned above: "Human wars, famines, droughts, plagues, physical and emotional abuse, and other forms of social deprivation not only leave their mark on society in harmful ways, but they also reek havoc deep within the cells of our bodies […]"; "[t]hese [subsequent] epigenetic changes can linger for a lifetime and can potentially be transmitted to offspring."[8]

Public discussions of epigenetics more generally, and transgenerational traumatic inheritance specifically, have brought to the forefront with renewed vigor and controversy a number of fundamental debates. Recent epigenetic findings, for example, further problematize the mind/body divide and complicate the "nature vs. nurture" debates that have long dominated discussions of human behavior and health. Furthermore, assumptions of biological determinism associated with genetic heredity are also coming under closer scrutiny. Whereas, previously, the dominant scientific assumption in genetics insisted that one's transmitted DNA did not change from one generation to another, mounting evidence now points to transmission of the changed epigenome, which can affect subsequent generations' behavior and health. At the center of these debates, in turn, stand questions of free will and personal responsibility. To what extent, for

[7] Representatively, one popular documentary series aired an episode on epigenetics, whose title played with this tendency to evoke the spectral. "The Ghost in Your Genes," 2005 episode of *Horizon* (BBC, 1964–2016). I play with this name in the title of my third chapter ("The Ghost in His Nerves").

[8] Smith, "The Epigenetics of Being Black and Feeling Blue," paragraph 5.

example, can one change one's epigenetic inheritance and what consequences might one's choices in her lifetime have for the wellbeing of future generations?

Although many of the questions and controversies sparked by epigenetic findings are rightfully being labeled as revolutionary, the central debates inherent in their public discussions have an uncannily similar precedent in the second half of the nineteenth century. Whereas today we might be said to live in the "(Epi)Genetic Age," the second half of the nineteenth century was referred to as the "Nervous Age." The latter name referred popularly not only to the prevalence of various nervous diseases that captivated both the public and scientific imaginations, but also to the source of cutting-edge scientific advancements when it came to understanding human behavior and nature. Whereas today genetics is often at the forefront of such insights, DNA was not discovered until the 1940s, and rapid advancements in the theorizations of the nervous system defined the dominant paradigm of the nineteenth century instead.

As I will show in subsequent chapters, advancements in understanding the nervous system sparked debates similar to those of today, both in academic and popular settings: To what extent is one defined by her heredity and biology? Does free will exist and what role might it play in changing the biology of the individual and of subsequent generations? What is the relationship between one's biology and social environment, and how are both related to freedom of choice and personal responsibility? Do mental illness and trauma-like psychic injury result from physical pathology alone or do emotions play a role (I use the terms "psychic wounding," "psychic injury," and "trauma-like psychic wounding" interchangeably, in order to invoke a more inclusive terminology that is not rooted specifically in the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries)? Can one control one's mental health by controlling and taking care of one's body?

Despite the apparent differences between the present-day "(epi)genetic" and the nineteenth-century "nervous" scientific paradigms, additional striking similarities come to the forefront. Both paradigms privilege the body, conceptualizing mental and emotional states (as well as changes in them) as results of physiologically "encoded" information (on the level of genes today and of nerves in the nineteenth century). Furthermore, the idea that biological changes in one generation could be inherited by the next — only recently "discovered" through epigenetic research — was prevalent in the second half of the nineteenth century, chiefly through the influences of the theory of degeneration. The latter asserted that, in addition to evolving, human beings also "devolved," a process that affected their bodies, with resultant physical changes passed on to subsequent generations. Even more strikingly, the idea that memory — including forms of "traumatic" memory — could be passed on through the body, without the direct involvement of the brain, existed in both the nineteenth-century scientific and public imaginations as well. Not unlike present-day epigenetic considerations, nineteenth-century scientific and popular texts also preoccupied themselves with "cell memory." Whereas epigenetics looks at "cell memory" in terms of gene transcription, however, nineteenth century scientists viewed it in terms of impressions received (and retained) by individual cells of the nervous system, with each one, in their view, endowed with a form of consciousness not necessarily dependent on the brain.

Overall, both present-day debates in epigenetics and nineteenth-century concerns focus heavily on physical and mental health of individuals and of specific groups of people. Today trauma is at the center of those concerns, and, during the late nineteenth century, psychic injury resulting from various forms of shock also played a similar role. Thus, turning to the second half of the nineteenth century and investigating the period's views on psychic injury, its

transgenerational transmission, and attendant scientific and cultural debates helps to shed light on present-day popular discussions as well. At its core, such a project first and foremost involves a historicization of the concept of trauma itself. As I will show in subsequent chapters, despite their many scientific and cultural similarities, present-day trauma and nineteenth-century shock have different theoretical genealogies and cannot be seen as fully interchangeable concepts.

Thus, in my project, I set out to historicize nineteenth-century views on psychic injury, with special emphasis on its relationship to the body and to physiological transmission to subsequent generations. Like a number of scholars before me, I assert that the conceptualization of trauma today functions in part as a product of specific historical and social circumstances that affected the concept's early development and continue to have bearing on present-day theoretical debates.[9] Most of the researchers that have undertaken similar nineteenth-century historicising projects in the past have investigated primarily the legacy of Charcot's and Janet's work, which in turn stemmed from the so-called "alienist" tradition and experimental hypnosis.[10] By contrast, I focus specifically on the neurological tradition, which conceptualized trauma-like psychic injury as, first and foremost, a wound of the nervous system, and not necessarily of the mind. Although in many ways, Freud is a central figure for both present-day trauma studies and trauma's nineteenth-century neurological roots, I focus primarily on his twentieth-century theories. Whereas a large amount of scholarship devoted to Freud's work already exists, other

[9] Most notably Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (New York: Basic Books, 1992); Ruth Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); Roger Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question* (New York: Routledge, 2008); and Jill L. Matus, *Shock, Memory and the Unconscious in Victorian Fiction* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[10] Luckhurst and Matus are notable exceptions; Luckhurst's genealogy goes all the way to "the railway spine diagnosis" in Victorian Britain of the 1860s, which developed in response to railroad accidents. Matus, in turn, looks at the same period in Britain, focusing specifically on memory and the unconscious.

nineteenth-century scholars central to the genealogy of trauma have been largely ignored. I therefore turn my attention to them instead.

Although scientific and medical sources occupy a central place in my project, this is not a work of medical history. Despite the fact that I focus heavily on the scientific "nervous" paradigm of the nineteenth century, my primary concern, first and foremost, involves the cultural and philosophical debates surrounding the rapidly changing understandings of the human mind, its relationship to the body, and the vulnerability of both to injury.

Nineteenth-century literary fiction provides unequalled access to insights into these cultural and philosophical debates of the period, thus playing a central role in my inquiry. Although today we live in a highly specialized world, where literature and the sciences (as well as branches of various disciplines in general) are part of largely separate professional fields, this was not the case in the nineteenth century. Although sciences of the mind, including neurology, were indeed professionalizing during this time, both the scientific and the literary discourses were nonetheless part of a much broader, more permeable, and interactive intellectual milieu. Furthermore, we now know that, contrary to previous belief, literature did not just react passively to discoveries supposedly already made in the mental sciences, simply incorporating and discussing them after the fact. Instead, the unprecedentedly nuanced exploration of the subjective experience of the human mind in the period's psychological fiction was fundamental for providing the sciences with fertile grounds for inquiry. At times, fiction even foresaw scientific developments and directly influenced the shape of their future theorizations.[11] Above all,

[11] Most notably, see Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot, and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (Boston: Routledge and Keagan Paul, 1983), 1–23; George Henry Levine, *Darwin and the Novelists: Patterns of Science in Victorian Fiction*

literature was the main intellectual public venue that investigated the implications of the rapid scientific developments for the human experience at large.

In my project, I focus specifically on the Russian case, for three main reasons. First, nineteenth century Russian fiction, particularly by F. Dostoevsky and A. Chekhov (on whom I focus), is especially renowned around the world for its psychological depth. Various mental scientists, including Freud, for example, made explicit references to it in their theoretical work. Second, literature played a particularly strong role in Russian society, with special status afforded to the discipline. By the time the country's psychiatrists began organizing, for example, claiming special knowledge of the human psyche, they had to position themselves explicitly in competition with Russian literature, which at the time was hailed as both the ultimate authority on the elusive "Russian soul" and as the primary vehicle for social and moral change in the country.[12]

Last, but not least, nineteenth-century Russian sciences of the mind presented a curious, and in many ways unique, amalgamation of various European scientific lineages and traditions. I focus largely on the period that starts with the 1860s and ends roughly with the close of the century. Following Russia's humiliating defeat by the British in the Crimean War in the 1850s, Alexander II instituted a series of liberal reforms that, among other things, placed special emphasis on modernization. The latter was to be accomplished in part through importing various European scientific advancements. As a result, numerous Russian scholars, including scientists

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(Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 1–24; and Irina Sirotkina, *Diagnosing Literary Genius: A Cultural History of Psychiatry in Russia,* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press), 8–9.

[12] See Sirotkina, *Diagnosing Literary Genius,* 8–9.

of the mind, went to countries like Germany, France, and Britain, in order to study and research abroad. When they came back, they implemented the things they learned by organizing departments of psychiatry and neuropathology at Russian universities, starting relevant academic journals, and continuing to correspond and collaborate with their colleagues abroad. Thus, whereas various Western European scientific traditions often stemmed from particular, country-specific lineages (British associationist psychology, for example, or the famed German emphasis on neuro- and psychopathological nosologies), the Russian tradition was eclectic and decidedly pan-European in nature.

In my analysis of nineteenth-century Russian literature I avoid the one-directional interpretive move in which present-day trauma theory is automatically imported into the world of the nineteenth-century text as a means of retrospective diagnosing. Instead, I put the nineteenth-century literary texts into conversation with scientific literature contemporary to their own time. Occasionally, I also put nineteenth-century theories on trauma-like psychic injury into a mutually elucidating dialogue with present-day scholarship on trauma. My interpretive strategies accomplish three main things: First, they challenge the frequent tendency in literary criticism to "retrospectively diagnose" nineteenth-century fictional characters through one-directional application of modern trauma to the world of the work in question. Similarly to the Victorian literary scholar Jill Matus, I believe such a move alone to be problematic because it treats trauma theory as an ahistorical, transcendent category universally applicable across different time periods.[13] In its ahistoricity, such a move also erases the rich tradition of mental sciences of the nineteenth century, a time of prolific scientific exploration that in fact gave birth to present-day trauma's theoretical antecedents. In addition to recovering nineteenth-century perspectives on

[13] Matus, 1–20. Matus's work was a major initial inspiration for my own project.

psychic injury, the two-directional analysis I rely on also helps to uncover previously unexplored interpretive possibilities in the period's fiction and helps to provide additional, nineteenth century-inspired insight into present debates in modern trauma.

The Chapters

My project is divided into four chapters: Chapter One focuses on the theoretical and historical background and serves as a foundation for the rest of the work, whereas the remaining three chapters explore specific key ideas more closely, while using literary works by Dostoevsky and Chekhov as individual case studies. Chapter One ("A Wound By Many Names: Historicizing Trauma") is further subdivided into various sections: (1) a brief theoretical overview of shock and its delineation from trauma; followed by (2) the background on the "nervous" paradigm of the nineteenth century; (3) the period's theories of the unconscious; (4) nineteenth-century theories of memory; (4) and on the so-called "shock spectrum," with its hysteric and neurasthenic ends; and closing with (5) an overview of the Russian sciences of the mind and their relationship to nineteenth-century literature.

My overview of contemporary trauma scholarship in the humanities[14] largely focuses on the dominant Freudian/Caruthian paradigm, as well as on those of its criticisms that are most relevant to my work. I identify three areas of particular interest for my investigation: (1) the under-theorization of the chronic, as opposed to acute, traumatic experience, and (2) the tendency to overlook bodily memory, as well as its (3) transgenerational physical transmission.

[14] Henceforward, when I refer to "trauma studies," I am speaking specifically about trauma scholarship in the humanities, not in the sciences (unless otherwise indicated).

My inclusion of detailed background information on the nervous system, as well as on its relationship to nineteenth-century theories of the unconscious and memory, is guided by the need to establish clearly the (in some ways) fundamentally different paradigm of the nineteenth century. Because of the many similarities in terminology between that period and our own, it is often easy to superimpose our modern biases and assumptions onto nineteenth-century theoretical constructs.

In Chapter Two ("Bodily Willfulness: Intentionality and the Unconscious in Dostoevsky's *A Writer's Diary*), I examine nineteenth-century theories of the unconscious more closely. We see that, unlike its (post)Freudian[15] counterpart, the nineteenth-century unconscious was conceived of in highly physiological terms. We also look at the various debates that problematized the meaning of the term itself (as well as of "consciousness" more generally) and at the heated arguments that arose from its biologically deterministic underpinnings. Dostoevsky engages with these questions, among many others, through his involvement with public court trials in the 1870s, specifically with the cases of two female defendants accused (separately) of attempted murder. In both the women's prosecution and defense, their states of mind and degrees of consciousness played a key role. As he weighs in on the cases, Dostoevsky problematizes the materialist/spiritualist debate of his time. The former position argued that consciousness was a direct product of one's biology, throwing into question the very existence of the soul. The latter, by contrast, argued for the soul's primacy over the body, asserting that it used the latter as only a vehicle to accomplish its goals. Whereas the materialist stance threw into question the concept of free will and personal responsibility, the spiritualists vehemently insisted on both. As I

[15] Throughout, I am using this term broadly and specifically in reference to Freud's theories and to those scholars who followed him.

demonstrate later, Dostoevsky reaches for a third option altogether, breaking through the binary and mirroring some of the newly emerging theories in the mental sciences of his day.

In Chapter Three ("The Ghost in His Nerves: Hysteria and Transgenerational Traumatic Inheritance in *The Brothers Karamazov*), we take a closer look at nineteenth-century theories of memory — particularly "organic memory" — which made provisions for a purely physical imprinting of experience directly on the nervous cells associated with various body parts. Combined with the theory of degeneration and heredity, "organic memory" allowed for a theorization of the transmission of trauma-like wounding directly through the nervous system to one's descendants. In *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880), for example, Alesha inherits not only his mother's hysteria, but also some of her physiologically imprinted memories. As we explore the hysteric end of the shock spectrum, we once again wrestle with questions of biological determinism, heredity, and free will, this time also turning to the effects of both on the possibility of healing from psycho-neuropathology on individual, familial, and national levels.

In the final, fourth chapter ("The Hero with Cracked Spine: Neurasthenia and Chekhov's *Ivanov"*), I continue to explore the implications of biologically deterministic theories of heredity and psychic injury for both the individual and the nation. This time, however, I switch focus to the neurasthenic end of the shock spectrum. As we get nearer to the close of the century, the economic bodily conceptualizations of the nervous system as containing finite, limited amounts of energy seize both the scientific and the public imaginations. Whereas, previously, one's susceptibility to psycho-neuropathology was linked chiefly to degeneration and one's heredity, at fin-de-siècle the threat of nervous pathology becomes omnipresent. The modern world itself, with its overwhelmingly fast, intense stimulation, now threatens even previously healthy people

with nervous depletion, if those people do not take meticulous care of their lifestyle and do not "nourish" their nerves. In Chekhov's *Ivanov* (1887, 1889), we encounter one such typical neurasthenic, whose suffering becomes the ground for interpretive competition between the literary and the scientific discourses of the time. Neither discourse, however, is able to witness Ivanov's suffering empathically or fully objectively, with Chekhov delivering a resounding criticism to both for their adherence to formulaic modes of knowledge. Furthermore, Chekhov explores the implications and consequences of living in a culture that readily accepts the overly generalized conceptualization of nervous pathology, with individuals constantly tasked with vigilant maintenance of their nervous health.

Overall, I aim for two goals in this project: (1) the exploration of scientific and cultural debates stemming from the physiologization of trauma and the mind more generally, and (2) at a theoretical intervention that reintroduces nineteenth-century concepts of physiologically understood psychic injury into discussions of trauma. Thus, I do not aim at a comprehensive analysis of late nineteenth-century Russian literature generally and of Dostoevsky's and Chekhov's oeuvres in particular. I fear that to do justice to the latter three enterprises within the context of my other two aims, is beyond the scope of this project and is grounds for a longer future work.

Above everything else, I hope that this current project will emphasize just how relevant the debates of the past are to our present moment in history. Turning back to the nineteenth century and gaining a deeper understanding of the roots of some of the debates that are resurfacing with new vigor today can not only help us embrace some of the largely forgotten positive insights of these arguments (like reclaiming the role of the body in our psychic

experiences, for example), but also help us to avoid some of the dangerous pitfalls associated with extreme, "crude" materialism and essentialized heredity (like scientifically legitimated, institutionalized racism, sexism, and classism).

CHAPTER ONE

A WOUND BY MANY NAMES: HISTORICISING TRAUMA

> "The study of psychological trauma has a curious history — one of episodic amnesia. Periods of active investigation have alternated with periods of oblivion. Repeatedly, in the past century, similar lines of investigation have been taken up and abruptly abandoned, only to be rediscovered much later. Classic documents of fifty or one hundred years ago often read like contemporary works. Though the field has in fact an abundant and rich tradition, it has been periodically forgotten and must be periodically reclaimed."[16]

In this chapter I provide the historical and theoretical background for the rest of the work. My main goal here is to differentiate the conceptualizations of nineteenth-century psychic injury from those of trauma today. Doing so also requires a similar delineation of two concepts that are closely related to both nineteenth-century and present-day theories of psychic injury: the unconscious and memory. I therefore provide the necessary historical and theoretical background that differentiates nineteenth-century theories of the unconscious and memory from their modern-day counterparts. This differentiation work takes us back to, in many respects, a

[16] Herman, 7.

fundamentally different paradigm, the scope of which needs to be clearly laid out before turning to subsequent chapters. Pre-psychoanalytic views of the mind, as well as of its many injuries, are invariably tied to the rapidly evolving nineteenth-century theorizations of the nervous system. I therefore lay out the fundamental scientific assumptions of the Nervous Age by turning to some of the pivotal scientific theories tied to the understandings of psychic and nervous injury. In closing and in preparation for turning our attention to the literary cases in the subsequent chapters, I also provide an overview of the Russian mental sciences and their relationship to literary fiction.

In my differentiation of shock from trauma, I ultimately demonstrate that the former differs from the latter in the following ways: First, it is overwhelmingly chronic (as opposed to acute) and physiological (as opposed to psychogenic) in nature, with pathology primarily originating in the nervous system. Furthermore, whereas with trauma, emphasis is placed on the role of the brain and ultimately on narrativization for potential healing, with shock, intervention is overwhelmingly physiological in nature. Nineteenth-century psychic injury also does not necessarily involve the direct participation of the brain. Instead, injury, its transmission to future generations, as well as healing can all take place purely on the level of the body, without the direct involvement of consciousness and the brain.

Delineating Shock

Present-day usage of the term "shock" has a diverse history, in part responsible for the vagueness of contemporary definitions and its frequent present conflation with trauma. Indeed, with shock's centrality to accounts of the emergence of both technological and artistic modernity, the term has seen a breadth of historical applications: by Baudelaire to the urban experience of

the 1860s, to the phenomenon of "railway spine" during the same decade, as well as to soldiers' experiences of so-called "shell shock" during World War I, to name but a few. Edwin Morris's definition in *A Practical Treatise on Shock* (1867) is representatively ambiguous in its scope: "that peculiar effect on the animal system, produced by violent injuries from any cause, or from violent mental emotions — such as fear, grief, horror, or disgust."[17] The definition's vagueness contains a question central to subsequent debates about shock: do the psychic symptoms result from a physical lesion that may or may not be locatable in the body or are the symptoms psychogenic in origin? As I will demonstrate repeatedly, pre-psychoanalytic theories of shock and of related pathology focused overwhelmingly on the former, as opposed to the latter, assertion.

The intense debates surrounding the origin of shock-related symptoms repeatedly re-surfaced throughout both the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. The scientific arguments surrounding railroad insurance claims by passengers who survived train crashes in Britain, starting with the late 1860s, for example, perpetuated these controversies, without providing clarity on the issue.[18] Similar debates took place in Germany in connection with workers' compensation under the newly instituted Social Insurance system in the 1880s.[19] Controversies surrounding shell-shock in World War I soldiers in Europe resurrected these debates in the scientific community yet again, echoes of which resurfaced in but a slightly changed form in the

[17] Edwin Morris, *A Practical Treatise on Shock after Surgical Operations and Injuries, with Especial Reference to Shock Caused by Railway Accidents* (London: Hardwicke, 1867), 1.

[18] For more on this topic, see Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: Trains and Travel in the 19th Century* (New York: Urizen, 1979).

[19] For an in-depth exploration of this topic, see Andreas Killen, *Berlin Electropolis: Shock, Nerves, and German Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

wake of the Vietnam War in the United States, eventually contributing to the creation of the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) diagnosis in 1980. Interestingly enough, although World War I was the first armed conflict to bring shell shock to European awareness, Russian doctors became interested in similar issues with the troops as early as the Russo-Japanese war (1904-1905).[20] At stake in all of these cases is the second fundamental issue that dominated debates around shock: whether the symptoms experienced by the sufferers resulted from a locatable physiological change caused by the overwhelming external stimuli or whether the victims had a latent predisposition, which was only triggered by the transpired events.

In contrast to modern-day theories of trauma, theorizations of shock are embedded in what Tim Armstrong aptly refers to as the "neurasthenic paradigm," and to which I will refer as the "shock spectrum" from now on.[21] Instead of being associated with an unconscious wound of the mind, nineteenth-century psychic injury is instead tied to economic bodily models of shock, in which experience involves timely processing of a succession of external stimuli. Shock itself, in turn, is conceptualized in one of two main ways during this time, each of which I will discuss in more detail later: (1) an excessive excitation of the nervous system, in which stimuli and external impressions are not processed in time and ultimately overwhelm the body and mind and (2) a physical lesion on the nervous system, which results from fatigue and "draining" of nervous energy.

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[20] For a more detailed discussion of this issue, see Laura L. Phillips, "Gendered Dis/ability: Perspectives from the Treatment of Psychiatric Casualties in Russia's Early Twentieth-Century War," *Social History of Medicine* 20.2 (2007), 333–50.

[21] For an in-depth discussion of the differences between the concepts of trauma and nineteenth-century conceptualizations of shock, see Tim Armstrong, "Two Types of Shock in Modernity," *Critical Quarterly* 42.1 (2000), 60–74.

Thus, shock in the nineteenth century encapsulates both symptoms of hysterical over-excitement and neurasthenic nervous depletion. George F. Schrady's entry in an 1895 medical encyclopedia, for example, representatively distinguishes between the two types of symptomatology for shock, describing "two forms, the first, the ordinary one, exhibiting the phenomena of torpidity and the other those of excitement. The former is styled shock proper or torpid shock, the latter shock with excitement or erethistic shock."[22] The entry on shock (*shok*) in the Russian *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar'* (1890–1907), on the other hand, stresses the torpid symptomatology of the condition and refers only to its physiological causes. It does mention, however, that these physiological injuries are not always discovered in the body and sometimes are discerned only through the symptoms of shock itself. [23] The same source, however, includes a much longer entry on the "traumatic neuroses" (*travmaticheskie nevrozy*), a diagnostic category sometimes used interchangeably with shock in the nineteenth century. The encyclopedia defines the condition as:

> An illness of the nervous system, which is not accompanied by a material, anatomical damage to any of its parts, but which instead depends solely on the disturbance of the system's function as a whole or of its certain parts, as resulting,

[22] George F. Schrady, "Shock," in *Twentieth Century Practice: An International Encyclopedia of Modern Medical Science,* ed. T.L. Stedman (London: Sampson Low, 1895), 141.

[23] I.E. Andreevskii et al., eds., *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar'* (St. Petersburg: I.A. Efron, 1890), XXXIX: 766–67. Spelling modernized. Henceforward, references to this source will be abbreviated as "ES," followed by the volume and page numbers (i.e. *ES*, XXXIX: 766–67).

> for example, from *excessive or insufficient excitation, mild fatiguability, exhaustability, etc.*[24]

The entry then goes on to divide the symptoms explicitly into two major symptomatological groups — those of hysteria and neurasthenia.

As we will see in Chapters Three and Four, by the 1870s and 1880s, both hysteria and neurasthenia had become "diagnostic umbrella" conditions, which were associated with the general malfunctioning of the nervous system and thus were often affiliated with other nervous conditions that resulted from the same general problem. In Chapter Three, for example, Alesha's inherited nervous condition is referred to interchangeably as hysteria and its peasant-associated variant *klikushestvo,* highlighting the diagnostic slippage between the two illnesses. Alesha's brothers, in turn, are all associated with various types of nervous malfunctioning, with the novel as a whole creating the impression that the Karamazov sons in part function as a demonstration of all the various ways malfunctioning nervous systems inherited from "abnormal" parents can be expressed through different, yet related, nervous conditions. In Chapter Four we see that the protagonist Ivanov has fallen victim to over-exhaustion, or neurasthenia, which in turn functions as a "gate-way" condition to a host of other physiological and emotional problems associated with a weakened nervous system.

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[24] Ibid, XXXIII: 682–83. Henceforward, unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own and, where necessary, will be followed by original text in the footnotes. "Такое заболевание нервной системы, которое не обусловлено материальным, анатомическим повреждением какого-нибудь отдела ее [...], а зависит лишь от нарушения отправлений ее в целом или какой нибудь части, напр. от *чрезмерной или недостаточной возбудимости, или легкой утомляемости, истощаемости и т.п."* Spelling modernized; original abbreviation; my emphasis.

Trauma: A Brief Overview

In contrast to the physiologically-based shock, present-day trauma is conceptualized primarily as an unconscious, psychogenic wound of the mind that manifests itself primarily as a dysfunction of memory. Dominant theories of trauma also privilege the acute, circumscribed traumatic experience, as opposed to the chronic. Those theorizations stand in further contrast to shock by privileging the exact, unmediated return of the traumatic content and placing emphasis on narrativization as a potential vehicle of healing.

Although the "birth" of trauma in the public eye is often associated with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder's (PTSD's) first inclusion in the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-III) in 1980, its history goes back to the nineteenth century and can be divided into four stages (some of which overlap with those of shock). They are: (1) the history surrounding the physiological conceptions of nervous shock (and its hysteric and neurasthenic ends); (2) "alienist" studies of hysteria, born in the context of late nineteenth-century France; (3) investigations of shell-shock and war trauma, which originated in Britain in the wake of World War I and continued into Vietnam War era discussions in the United States; and (4) the debates surrounding sexual and domestic violence, born out of feminist movement(s) in Western Europe and North America.[25] In my brief overview here, I focus on the dominant theoretical paradigm specifically in the humanities, the roots of which scholars often trace to Sigmund Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) and Cathy Caruth's work in the mid-nineties.

[25] Herman, 9.

Freud's involvement with trauma can be grouped into four stages: (1) his involvement with the concept of the "economic wound" in the 1890s, through which he began to re-conceptualize psychic injury from the previous, shock-related models of nervous depletion to the status of an internalized psychic wound divorced from physiological injury, but accompanied by neurological changes and pain;[26] (2) trauma's emergence in his work on hysteria in the 1890s, particularly in collaboration with Breuer;[27] (3) his engagement with war neuroses in the wake of

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[26] For a detailed discussion, see Armstrong, 60–74. In his account of melancholia in *Draft G* (most likely 1894), Freud attaches trauma to an actual wound and localizes it. The shock resulting in trauma, according to him, can be both external or internal, "real" or imagined. Initially, he attaches the concept of trauma to a neurological phenomenon, later, however, replacing it with the imaginary shock, and eventually, locating it somewhere in between. In *Draft G* Freud describes melancholia as a consequence of neurasthenia involving "mourning the loss of libido," which functions as an internalized wound. According to Freud, "the in-drawing ... into the psychic sphere" leads to:

> an effect of suction upon the adjoining amounts of excitation. The associated neurones must give up their excitation, *which produces pain.* The uncoupling of associations is always painful; there sets in, as though through an *internal hemorrhage,* an impoverishment in excitation (in the free store of it) — which makes itself known in the other instinctive drives and functions. As an inhibition, this indrawing operates like a *wound,* in a manner analogous to pain […] A counterpoint to this would be mania where the overflowing excitation is communicated to all associated neurones. Here, then, there is a similarity to neurasthenia. In neurasthenia a quite simple impoverishment takes place owing to excitation running out, as it were, through a hole. But in that case what is pumped empty is s.s. (somatic sexual excitation); in melancholia the hole is in the psychic sphere. Sigmund Freud, *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess, 1877–1904,* ed. Jeffrey M. Masson (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1985), 103–104.

[27] During Freud's early research in the 1890s, he distinguishes between ordinary hysteria and traumatic neuroses, also introducing the idea of "traumatic hysteria" in "On the Psychical Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena," a paper co-authored with Breuer in 1895. Eventually, in papers published in 1894 and 1896, Freud makes the controversial conclusion that sexual abuse lies at the root of all female hysteria. He daringly asserts that hysteria results from "a precocious experience of sexual relations with actual excitement of the genitals, resulting from sexual abuse committed by another person […] before the child has reached sexual maturity." Sigmund Freud, "Heredity and Aetiology of the Neuroses," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London: Hogarth Press, 1962), III: 154. Soon after,

World War I in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*; and, (4) finally, through his comparison of post-traumatic symptoms to the "forgetting" of Jewish monotheism, as well as in his discussion of the latency phenomenon and its connection to childhood traumata in *Moses and Monotheism* (1937).[28] In my overview I focus primarily on the third category.

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* Freud introduced the acute model of traumatization that involved exact later returns of the traumatic event(s). His theorizations later served as the foundation for Cathy Caruth's theories in the mid-nineties and for much of today's thinking about trauma. In this work, Freud reflects on the symptoms of war neuroses in the wake of World War I. He expresses his puzzlement in the face of his patients' tendency to return to traumatic events and re-experience them through what he termed "repetition automatism." The discovery led Freud to rethink parts of his psychoanalytic theory and to theorize the "death drive" in addition to the "pleasure principle." According to the latter, the patients' return to the previously experienced events should have followed a pattern of "wish fulfilment," instead, however, the patients re-enacted the horrors they witnessed in surprisingly literal ways.

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however, he infamously repudiated his conclusion and insisted that fantasies of such abuse or "forbidden desires" could lead to similar symptomatology, thus implicitly linking the "seduction theory" to "normal" female psychological development. Sigmund Freud, "An Autobiographical Study," in *Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud,* trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1959), 20: 34.

[28] Finally, in *Moses and Monotheism,* Freud makes the claim that "three points — early happenings, within the first five years of life, the forgetting, and the characteristic of sexuality and aggressiveness — belong close together. The traumata are either bodily experiences or perceptions, especially those heard or seen; that is to say, they can be either experiences or impressions." Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), 72–101. Freud thus claims that not everyone reacts to traumatic events in the same way and emphasizes the role of unconscious agency in the course of development of traumatic symptoms.

As a result of his observations, Freud comes to theorize that traumatization results because of the subject's experience of a sudden and overwhelming event that comes too soon, too unexpectedly, and overwhelms the individual's capacity to deal with it. According to him, the painful content of the event is "experienced," yet subsequently becomes repressed and banished to the unconscious. Freud claims, however, that the painful material repeatedly attempts to regain access to the individual's consciousness ("return of the repressed"), in order to be re-experienced, and terms this mechanism of repetitive returns "the repetition compulsion."[29]

The publications of Cathy Caruth's edited collection, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995), and monograph, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996), in turn, ushered in the most influential theoretical paradigm in contemporary trauma studies. Although the Caruthian conception of trauma builds on Freud's theories, combining them with the neuro-biological claims of Bessel O. van der Kolk, important differences from psychoanalysis emerge. On the one hand, the Caruthian traumatic paradigm does see trauma as primarily a disorder of memory, while placing strong emphasis on the role of dissociation in traumatization. At the same time, however, it insists on the pristinely preserved, *unmediated* content of the original traumatic event, thus fully disavowing the psychoanalytic agency of the unconscious. Thus, Caruth argues that a traumatic event is indeed associated with an outside stimulus that overwhelms the individual and renders her incapable of staying consciously present during it. She modifies Freud's ideas, however, arguing that, instead of actually experiencing the event, proceeding to repress it, the individual is never consciously present for it in the first place. In other words, the occurrence is never consciously processed and, in line with van der Kolk's neuro-biological

[29] Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (New York: Norton, 1989), 11–12, 25, and 36–38.

theories, is never properly stored as memory. Instead, the traumatic material is registered in a fragmented form. According to Caruth, the traumatic content returns in a surprisingly literal form (similarly to the experiences of Freud's patients) following certain "triggers" connected to the original event, as part of its attempt to re-enter consciousness in order to be processed and properly stored as memory.[30]

Caruth claims that the nature of the traumatic encounter lies not in the event itself (after all, the same horrific event can influence people in various ways, leading to traumatization in some, while failing to do so in others), but in the individual's failure to perceive the event in time. In other words, the locus of the traumatic encounter lies in the rupture of the individual's ordered experience of time and traumatizes through one's realization of her belated encounter with death (or someone else's for that matter, through "secondary witnessing").

Over the years, Caruth's theories have come under many criticisms, most notably from Ruth Leys,[31] E. Ann Kaplan,[32] Judith Herman,[33] and Laura Brown,[34] among others. The most

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[30] Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 4.

[31] With her publication of *Trauma: A Genealogy* in 2000, Ruth Leys emerged as one of the most outspoken critics of Caruth's theories at the time. Leys criticized Caruthian trauma theory especially for its ahistoricity, claims of universality, and the disproportionate emphasis on the traumatic event itself and its pristinely unchanged nature. In addition, she pointed out the inherent contradiction in the Freudian conception of trauma, as well as in subsequent theories that build on it. All trauma theory, she claims oscillates between so called "mimetic" and "anti-mimetic" views. In the "mimetic" conception, the traumatic subject's state is similar to that under hypnosis — she is incapable of making conscious, willed choices and imitates the will of another. In the "anti-mimetic" theorizations, associated with scientific, positivist views on trauma, however, a passive subject is overwhelmed by a completely external event, but still retains her sovereignty. This unresolved oscillation in turn leads to contradictory questions about the mind in traumatization — whether it simply acts as a passive registrant of the overwhelming, intrusive external event, or whether it plays a more active role. Ruth Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1–18. Leys's challenges to trauma's supposed

universality and ahistoricity are particularly useful for my work. Unfortunately, she points out problems without necessarily providing solutions and her historicization does not go far back enough, as she focuses primarily on the "alienist" hysteria-related tradition that arose from France in the 1890s.

[32] Similarly to Leys, E. Ann Kaplan problematizes the dominant paradigm's excessive emphasis on dissociation, its focus on the pristinely preserved nature of the traumatic event, and lack of historicization of the concept. While critical of universal applicability of van der Kolk's theories on dissociation and preservation of the event without interference by the unconscious, she does not dismiss his theories completely. Instead, she effectively argues that in some cases van der Kolk's claims do hold up, but do not describe all the possibilities. Kaplan cites more recent neurobiological research by Joseph Ledoux, who claims (basing his theories on experimentation with rats) that trauma involves emotional, as opposed to "conscious memory" and that, in some cases, victims of PTSD can actually remain conscious of the trauma. Kaplan introduced a more complex, pluralistic system of brain functioning in trauma, which allowed her to negotiate between the theories of two opposing camps: the exclusive emphasis on dissociation in Caruthian and neurobiological theories, on the one hand, and the excessive emphasis on the unconscious processes without acknowledgement of the realities of neuroscience on the other. *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 1–42. In doing so, Kaplan outlined three possibilities in traumatization: (1) "dissociation function […] in which the trauma is not accessible to cognition or memory, and where the event is understood to come from outside, not mediated by the unconscious"; (2) " the circuitry [...] which involves both dissociation and cognition, thus allowing for the trauma to be in conscious memory"; and (3) a function with ties to Freud's "seduction theory," in which the victim identifies with the perpetrator and is implicated in the traumatization. Ibid, 38.

[33] From the outset, the psychiatrist and women's rights activist Judith Herman has been one of the most outspoken and influential scholars in advocating for a traumatic paradigm that includes the predominant experiences of women. Herman's most significant contribution is the insistence that the diagnostic criteria for PTSD are in most cases simply inadequate for survivors of long-term and extreme situations (be they connected to childhood abuse, domestic violence, or political terror and torture). PTSD's definition at the time (and I would argue now as well) and its bias towards short-term, circumscribed events (with combat, disaster, and rape as prototypes) does not take into account and adequately explain the complicated consequences of long-term trauma that often results in complex, multi-system symptoms and serious developmental disruptions. *Trauma and Recovery,* 1–33.

[34] Brown's main argument, similar to Herman's, asserts that the diagnostic criteria for PTSD have been determined by the dominant culture (male, white, Christian), with one stark example of these biases clearly evident in the DSM-III R's definition of trauma as an an event "outside the range of human experience." Brown points out, however, that violence and repetitive, chronic traumatization are not an infrequent occurrence with women and various marginalized, under-privileged groups. She asserts that the diagnostic criteria in fact refer to the "range of human experience" as applicable only to the dominant culture. “Not Outside the Range: One Feminist

relevant criticisms for my work focus on the inadequate theorization of the chronic, as opposed to acute, traumatic experience. In addition, as we saw in the Introduction, current research within the sciences has begun focusing heavily on the physiological effects of trauma, as well as its physical transgenerational transmission. This focus, however, is not reflected within the humanities. Thus, turning to nineteenth-century investigations of shock provides us with an opportunity to explore a theoretical paradigm that conceives of psychic injury *primarily* as a chronic condition, and one with physiological roots and symptoms. Only recently has trauma research in the neurosciences begun emphasizing the role of the autonomic nervous system in chronic traumatization, for example.[35] Pre-psychoanalytic nineteenth-century conceptualizations of psychic injury, by contrast, are heavily focused on the nervous system and its involuntary processes, transferring their assumptions about the latter onto beliefs about the workings of the unconscious mind. Furthermore, exploring the theories of shock and of related concepts allows us to investigate the cultural debates surrounding the implications of a chronic, physiological, transgenerational conceptualization of psychic injury.

This nineteenth-century theoretical framework brings up a myriad of questions, which are reflected in the period's literature and which I explore in this and subsequent chapters. In Chapter Two, for example, Dostoevsky emphasizes problems with defining consciousness and unconsciousness in general and when attempting to determine premeditation in the Kairova and the Kornilova attempted murder cases specifically. He explicitly refers to the scientific scholarship of his day to make parts of his case. In the process, Dostoevsky wrestles with

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Perspective on Psychic Trauma," in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory,* ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 102.

[35] Bessel van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (New York: Penguin Books, 2015), 22–105.

questions that reflect the popular controversies and general preoccupations of his day. He asks, for example: what is the relationship between involuntary bodily processes (of the autonomic nervous system) and the involuntary functions of the mind? Do free will and intentionality exist and, if so, how can they help one to avoid psychic injury or help one heal from it?

As we move on to *The Brothers Karamazov* in Chapter Three, the themes of problematized intentionality and personal responsibility remain, but they become further complicated by considerations of transgenerational psychic and physiological inheritance. Again, Dostoevsky grapples with controversial questions that preoccupy both the scientific and the popular imaginations of his day. If the bodily and psychic injuries of one generation can be transmitted to the next, he asks in the novel, then how and to what extent can one expect to heal from those wounds? What must one do to lessen the transmission of inherited and new wounds to one's own offspring? And what effect might such assumptions about transgenerational transmission have on the concept of personal responsibility?

By the time we get to the 1880s and to Chekhov's *Ivanov* in the final chapter, the question about personal responsibility for the creation of new nervous injuries and, implicitly, for their transmission to future generations assumes central importance. If one's nervous health depends not only on one's heredity, but on the environmental stresses of modern life and one's lifestyle as well, Chekhov asks, then what constitutes appropriate individual "maintenance" and "nourishment" of one's nervous system? Can such "maintenance" help avoid psychic injury and thus eliminate the possibility of its transmission to future generations?

The Nervous System and the Evolution of Its Conceptualizations

Before exploring the answers to these questions in the period's literary fiction in more detail, however, I first provide a general background on the theorizations of the nervous system in the second half of the nineteenth century. Since understandings of psychic injury and its surrounding issues are deeply rooted in the period's concerns with the nervous system, an examination of those fundamental assumptions is necessary before proceeding. I focus primarily on the discoveries and concepts pivotal to the theories of nineteenth-century psychic injury: the evolution of the economic (as opposed to the hydraulic) conceptualization of the nervous system; the various discoveries contributing to the understanding of unconscious bodily processes, which eventually contributed to the attribution of volition to individual nervous cells; and the individual nervous cells' growing independence from the uni-directional dominance by the brain.

The transition from a hydraulic, humoural-based model of the nervous system,[36] with its primary center in the brain,[37] to an electrical model that grew increasingly more independent

[36] The Classical conceptualizations of the nervous system were humoural and relied on the assumption of a balance of an implicitly unlimited substance. Consciousness was associated with the brain or, in Aristotle's case, the heart. Plato, for example, argued for a tripartite conceptualization of the soul, in which the immortal, intellectual essence of the human being was located in the brain; the emotional part was connected with the heart; whereas the sensual (or concupiscent) part resided in the liver. The soul itself, Plato asserted, was placed by God in the marrow, which, in turn, was the first substance of the human being to be created. The marrow was primarily located in the brain and in the spinal cord, with males ejaculating it during intercourse (other types of marrow, such as bone marrow, for example, were sharply differentiated from that of the brain and the spinal cord). Immoderate intercourse thus led to excessive loss of marrow and, by extension, vital force. This concept prefigures the nineteenth-century economic conceptualization of nervous illness, in which excessive loss of the "nervous force" leads to disease. Plato, *The Dialogues of Plato*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (New York: Random House, 1920), II: 51–52.

[37] Eventually, the Alexandrians, with Galen most notably among them, demonstrated the origin of nerves to be the brain and the spinal cord, as well as clearly differentiating nerves from

from the brain, with nerves as consumers of power subject to the exhaustion and dissolution principle found in physics, began in the eighteenth century. Nervous disease (as well as, by extension, psychic pathology and injury) eventually was no longer seen as necessarily resulting from physiological pathology alone, but instead as an ever-present threat stemming from over-exhaustion, nervous strain, and insufficient nourishment of the nervous system. Furthermore, as the nineteenth century unfolded, the nervous system became increasingly conceptualized in terms of the consciousness of its individual nerves and the latter's intercommunication with one another. As a result, these developments led not only to the early theorizations of the unconscious (long before the psychoanalytic models), but also to modifications in the conceptualizations of memory, in some cases of which it now became possible for experiences to become imprinted directly on the nervous system, thus bypassing narrativizable memory and conscious intent and recollection.

Starting with the second half of the eighteenth century the then dominant Galenic doctrine on the functioning of the nerves exclusively as messengers of the brain began to be increasingly challenged. The brain, in turn, although still conceived of as the primary organ of consciousness, began to be dethroned, with the nervous system eventually being accorded the status of its own separate consciousness by the second half of the nineteenth century. Nerves

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tendons for the first time and even arguing that different nerves regulated sensation and motor control. Sidney Ochs, *A History of Nerve Functions: From Animal Spirits to Molecular Mechanisms* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1–24.

eventually became seen as actually originating sensations, as opposed to exclusively communicating important messages that formed in the brain.[38]

The first notable scholar to challenge the dominance of the brain in conceptualizations of consciousness and sensations was Robert Whyte (a.k.a. Whytt; 1714–66). In 1764, in the second edition of his *On the Observations, Nature and Cure of those Disorders Which Have Been Commonly Called Nervous, Hypochondriac, or Hysteric,* Whyte challenged the (at the time) much debated theory of the "nervous fluid," which claimed that said liquid supposedly traveled through the "tubes" of the nerve fibers and, through a hydraulic mechanism, enabled muscle contraction. Whyte threw into question not only the existence of the "nervous fluid" itself, but also its ability to cause muscle contraction, given the small size of the nerve fibers. By 1784, the doctrine of the "nervous fluid" was waning.[39] Furthermore, Whyte suggested that involuntary motion of the muscles, similarly to the voluntary motion, resulted not from the inherent properties of the muscle itself, but from the influence exercised by the nerve fiber.[40]

John Augustus Unzer (1729–99), in turn, made significant contributions to the origination of the idea that the nervous system is in charge of movements that could be volitional and that it, similarly to the brain or mind, can be conscious of the outside world, thus leading to actions, but often bypassing consciousness and intention. Unzer's ideas first saw light in his *Principles of a*

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[38] For a useful recent overview of major eighteenth-century developments in conceptualizations of the nervous system, see Laura Salisbury and Andrew Shail, eds., *Neurology and Modernity: A Cultural History of Nervous Systems, 1800–1950* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 1–40.

[39] Salisbury and Shail, 12.

[40] Robert Whytt, *Observations on the Nature, Causes, and Cure of Those Disorders Which Have Been Commonly Called Nervous, Hypochondriac, or Hysteric: To Which Are Prefixed Some Remarks on the Sympathy of the Nerves*, ed. James H. Armsby (Edinburgh: J. Balfour, 1765), 5.

Physiology of the Proper Animal Nature of Animal Organisms (1777), in which he suggested that sympathy (or the process of one organ being symptomatically affected by another) did not need the participation of the brain, but instead resulted from the external impressions on the nerves. Following in the footsteps of Albrecht von Haller (1708–1777), who first distinguished sensibility (which involved external stimulus that is consciously felt) from irritability (in which the stimulus is not consciously felt, despite producing an effect), Unzer argued that while the former often accompanied the latter, all nerves had irritability as a fundamental property. Thus, the nervous system now became endowed with a certain form of consciousness and was capable of volitional acts, bypassing intention.[41]

William Cullen (1710–1790), in turn, furthered the growing conceptualization of the autonomy of nerves by extending it to pathology and arguing in 1783 that "[i]n a certain view, almost all of the diseases of the human body could be called Nervous."[42] Cullen is credited with creating the term "neurosis" to define what he called "all those preternatural affections of sense or motion which are without pyrexia [fever], as a part of the primary disease; and all those which do not depend upon a topical affection of the organs, but upon a more general affection of the nervous system."[43]

Thomas Trotter (1760–1832), Marie Francois Xavier Bichat (1771–1802), Samuel Thomas Soemmerring (1755–1830), and Marshall Hall (17901–857) all contributed to the

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[41] Johann August Unzer, *The Principles of Physiology*, trans. Thomas Laycock (London: Syndenham Society, 1851), 240–44.

[42] William Cullen, *First Lines of the Practice of Physic*, ed. John Rotheram (Edinburgh: Bell and Bradfute, 1796), 141.

[43] Ibid, 142.

eventual solidification of the idea that nerves were both endowed with certain "agency" and possessed a form of consciousness. In 1807, Trotter carried out the first serious attempt to create a nosology of nervous diseases and argued that the mind was only one source of pathology, with the nervous system equally capable of adversely affecting the brain. Bichat and Thomas Soemmerring, in turn, through independent research, relocated the control over the body's organic functions from the brain to the ganglia of the "vegetative nervous system," a theory central to the future work of both Franz Joseph Gall (1758–1828) and his long-term collaborator Johann Gaspar Spurzheim (1776–1832).[44]

Finally, in 1832, Marshall Hall began his research on what he termed as the "reflex arc," soon revolutionizing the understanding of nervous communication. Hall defined the "reflex arc" as a property of the spinal marrow, which allowed for a direct conversion of sensation into action, a process that, once again, bypassed the brain. According to Hall, the stimuli that activated the reflexes affected the brain as well, but the latter's participation was not necessary for the reflexes to take place. Hall referred to a "system of excitor nerves, constantly operating in the animal economy, preserving its orifices open, its sphincters closed, and constituting the primum mobile of the important function of respiration" and, in his later theorizations, of circulation and digestion as well.[45] By the time Hall renamed his theorization of this new part of the nervous system the "dyastaltic nervous system" in 1850, the topic had become the subject of wide investigation and debate. It was, for example, the foundational concept that eventually led

[44] Salisbury and Shail, 16–17.

[45] Marshall Hall, *Memoirs on the Nervous System*, ed. Ernest Hart (London: Sherwood, Gilbert, and Piper, 1837), 74; *Synopsis of the Diastaltic Nervous System: Or the System of the Spinal Marrow and Its Reflex Arcs; As the Nervous Agent in All the Functions of Ingestion and of Egestion in the Animal Oeconomy* (London: J. Mallett, 1850), vii.

to William Carpenter's assertion that the brain, as an extension of the nervous system, also most likely carried out reflexes that were not conscious, thus leading to his theory of the unconscious.

As a result of these theories and others, by the second half of the nineteenth century, both in Europe and in Russia, the nervous system became viewed as something that, in many ways, functioned independently from the brain and was responsible for volitional acts that the latter often possessed no awareness of. When Claude Bernard's *Leçons sur la physiologie et la pathologie du système nerveux* (1858) came out in Russian translation in 1866, for example, the volume confidently referred to the existence of two types of sensitivity: conscious and unconscious. With conscious sensitivity, Bernard explains, the stimulus from the outside is perceived, proceeding to reach the brain, and is then transformed into a conscious movement. With unconscious sensitivity, by contrast, the stimulus still produces a reaction, but without the participation of the mind or the will.[46]

Both George Henry Lewes and Henry Maudsley refer to similar concepts in their popular works. In his widely read *The Physiology of Common Life* (1859), for example, Lewes argues against the assumption that the brain is the sole organ of the sensorium and insists that this function belongs to the nervous system as a whole.[47] Furthermore, Lewes asserts that individual nerves are part of overall consciousness.[48] Henry Maudsley, in turn, in a series of translated popular lectures, discusses experiments on a headless frog. When acid is put on the frog's leg, it

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[46] Klod Bernar, *Lektsii fiziologii i patologii nervnoi sistemy,* trans. Filipp V. Ovsiannikov and N.N. Makarov (St. Petersburg: N. Nekliudov, 1866), 277.

[47] Dzhordzh Genri L'iuis, *Fiziologiia obydennoi zhizni,* 2nd ed., trans. Sergei A. Rachinskii and Iakov A. Borzenkov (Moscow: A.I. Glazunov, 1863), 364 and 386–92.

[48] L'iuis, *Fiziologiia obydennoi zhizni,* 393.

uses the other leg on the same side in attempts to rub the irritant off. If the rubbing leg is also cut off, however, the frog switches to the leg on the other side. Maudsley asks whether the frog makes a conscious decision to change legs and, emphasizing the absence of the frog's brain, re-asserts the importance of expanding the concept of consciousness and the unconscious.[49]

Thus, by the middle of the nineteenth century, the nervous system not only became increasingly more independent from the brain, but was also no longer thought to have a single center, instead being comprised of multiple points of origin. It possessed its own system of communication that did not depend on the brain, but did require external stimuli in order to function properly and ultimately — survive.

(Re)conceptualizations of the Unconscious

In the previous section I demonstrated that the neuro-physiological discourses of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries led to the birth of new conceptualizations of both consciousness and the unconscious. In contemporary scholarship, however, discussions of the unconscious often start with Freud, and it is difficult to analyze nineteenth-century literary texts without automatic (and exclusive) employment of the psychoanalytic lense. Although sharing a number of similarities, however, the unconscious of the nineteenth century differs from the Freudian and from later psychoanalytic conceptions, and investigations of psychic injury in the period's literature should take into account these differences. Most relevant to my work are the general absence of the mechanism of repression in the pre–Freudian nineteenth-century theorizations of the unconscious, as well as its highly neurological and physiological nature. Of

[49] Genry Modsli, *Ob otnosheniiakh mezhdu telom i dukhom i mezhdu umstvennymi i drugimi rasstroistvami nervnoi sistemy: Tri lektsii Doktora G. Modsli* (Kazan': Universitetskaia tipografiia, 1871), 5–7.

course, as we will see time and again later, however, the assumptions of the literary writers of the time did not always align with the assertions within the mental sciences.

The period from the middle of the nineteenth century through its end was immensely preoccupied with what today we would call unconscious physical and mental processes. A much cited anecdotal story, first introduced by Coleridge, for example, illustrates the concerns of the period with the mysterious powers of the unknown recesses of the mind. An illiterate girl in a small town in Germany began speaking in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew while suffering from a fever. The seemingly supernatural circumstances were eventually explained by the discovery that, in childhood, the girl was befriended by a pastor who lived next door. Unconsciously, she absorbed the pastor's recitations, without, however, understanding the meaning of the words.[50]

The story and the contemporaneous discussions surrounding it provide an excellent illustration of the myriad of questions, concerns, and anxieties that haunted the second half of the nineteenth century in connection with the unconscious, many of which I explore in subsequent chapters, and in Chapter Two in particular. When Dostoevsky investigates Kairova's and Kornilova's intentionality in their crimes, for example, he in effect asks: What shapes their (and others') consciousness? How can Kornilova be both aware and unaware of her actions when she goes to the police to report her crime? In other words, do we have a singular or multiple selves, and is it possible to "know something without knowing you know it?" Furthermore, when Dostoevsky uses Kornilova's pregnancy to explain her "temporary insanity" during the crime, he

[50] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Kathleen Coburn and James Engell (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983), VII: 112–13. For a description of a similar case of "double consciousness," see Uil'iam Bendzhamin Karpenter, *Osnovaniia fiziologii uma, s ikh primeneniiami k vospitaniiu uma i izucheniiu ego boleznennykh sostoianii* (St. Petersburg: Znanie, 1877), 32–38.

speaks to the popular questions of the day, which ask: What influence does the unconscious have on consciousness and vice versa, and what role does one's biology (especially female) play in both scenarios? In light of considerations of the unconscious, what constitutes an "unhealthy" mental state? When Dostoevsky advocates on the part of Kornilova, arguing in favor of her future redemption, he formulates a response to the pressing considerations of his day: Can one control one's conscious and (indirectly) unconscious mind through will power? And can one avoid mental illness and other forms of deviance through such control?

As Jenny Bourne Taylor points out in her essay on the Victorian unconscious, the period saw the creation of numerous names for the concept, with terms like "unconscious cerebration," "latent mental modification," the "reflex action of the cerebrum, " and the "preconscious activity of the soul" (to name a few) often somewhat nebulous and hotly debated.[51] Unsurprisingly, these concerns manifested themselves in varying discourses and social domains: from the exhibitionist theatricality of mesmeric "cures" performed by Franz Mesmer and his disciples; the similarly dramatic investigations of hypnosis by James Braid, Charcot, and eventually Janet; the neurological concerns with reflexes and consciousness of the nerves (my primary focus); to the "super-natural" fascination with unconscious communication through processes like telepathy and seances with the dead.

Discussing the topic of the Victorian conceptions of the unconscious in *From Soul to Mind: The Emergence of Psychology, from Erasmus Darwin to William James,* Edward Reed provides a useful classification of these wide-ranging concerns into three main categories: (1) theories concerned with the supernatural (in which the unconscious was associated with a

[51] Jenny Bourne Taylor, "Obscure Recesses: Locating the Victorian Unconscious," in *Writing and Victorianism*, ed. J.B. Bullen (London: Addison Wesley Longman, 1997), 142.

Kantian "noumenal world," hidden behind everyday appearances); (2) naturalistic theories, including explanations by the "hard," neuro-physiological sciences of the day, which were primarily (but not exclusively) concerned with the mechanisms of bodily unconscious processes; and (3) the theory of the unconscious as a separate mind, distinct from consciousness.[52] My work in this study warrants a focus on the second and third categories, tying in the previously discussed neurological discoveries to the psychological theories of the separate unconscious they inspired. I will also touch briefly on the influence of mesmerism, and later hypnosis, on the formulations of the theories of a separate unconscious.

Theorizations of the unconscious play a significant role in Romantic thought earlier in the century, as well as predating the nineteenth century altogether. The nineteenth-century conceptions, however, bear significant differences, which are, in large part, connected to the developments in physiology and neurology, particularly the discovery of the reflex response in 1833, discussed earlier. In general, the mid-nineteenth-century unconscious actively created processes that were central to memory, behavior, and perception. Significantly for my work, it lacked the Freudian mechanism of repression (according to the sciences) and thus did not serve the function of containing psychic material banished from consciousness by the super-ego. Instead, the mid-nineteenth century unconscious functioned as part of effective information storage and efficient task delegation. Unlike the Freudian construct, it could revert to free delivery of unconscious content, if such delivery would lead to more efficient functioning.[53]

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[52] Edward Reed, *From Soul to Mind: The Emergence of Psychology from Erasmus Darwin to William James* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 128–30.

[53] Matus, 20–61; Taylor, 137–79; Jonathan Miller, "Going Unconscious," in *New York Review of Books* 42.7 (1995), 59.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, Sir William Hamilton, a professor of philosophy at Edinburgh University, developed the argument that the mind actively makes connections, creating new paths of thought and experience, as opposed to simply following those that already exist. This theory became dominant throughout Europe (including Russia) until the close of the century. Hamilton argued for the centrality of what he called "latent mental modification" to both psychology and philosophy of mind. He eventually delineated the "three degrees of mental latency," arguing that: (1) learned skills (like walking, reading, composing) become automatic initially through habit; (2) there are obscure and hidden powers of mind that become known only in extraordinary circumstances and mental states, such as dreaming, trance, or unhealthy mental states like insanity; and, even more radically, (3) consciousness is not only dependent on the unconscious, but in fact arises from it and is permeated by it. Hamilton argued, "I do not hesitate to maintain that what we are conscious of is constructed out of what we are not conscious of [...] we have no general consciousness."[54]

In addition to the neuro-physiological influences on the mid-nineteenth century conceptualizations of the unconscious, the construct was strongly influenced by James Braid's research on hypnosis, who, in turn, was initially inspired by the dramatic mesmeric performances of the 1840s. Most importantly, William Benjamin Carpenter and Thomas Laycock, the physiologists responsible for extending reflexes and unconscious action to the brain (as opposed to exclusively to the spinal cord), credited Braid's work as the most influential inspiration for their own theories.[55]

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[54] Karpenter, 86. Original emphasis.

[55] Miller, “Going Unconscious,” 59.

The Scottish surgeon James Braid first began making his inquiries into the mechanisms behind mesmerism in the 1840s. By this time, Mesmer's method had been the subject of heated debate for a number of decades, with opinions split along two lines: those who followed Mesmer's claims that mesmeric cures resulted from the "operator's" skillful manipulation of the universal "magnetic fluid" (a vitalistic concept initially inspired by Newton's gravity) and those that believed that the effects of the mesmeric performances resulted from the patient's susceptibility. Braid himself immediately dismissed the idea of the fluid and formulated a new theory, which eventually dealt a decisive blow to the pseudo-scientific theory of "animal magnetism" (which nonetheless continued to enjoy a wide-spread interest in popular culture both in Europe and Russia). Braid proposed that the suspension of the patient's will and the subsequent "cures" were the neurological consequences of the fixed stare of the operator to which the patient was subjected, as well as a result of an "absolute repose of the body, fixed attention, and a suppressed respiration concomitant with that fixity of attention."[56]

Although Braid's combination of hypnotic and phrenological theories eventually became as extravagant as Mesmer's in terms of its claims for a breadth of dramatic cures, he did, unwittingly, bring attention to the "reflexive quality" of the brain. The latter refers to the rather unclear area of cognition and action between those that are definitely automatic and those that are clearly willed and for which consciousness is absolutely necessary. In their formulations of the "reflexive quality" of the brain ("unconscious cerebration" for Carpenter and "reflex function of the brain" for Laycock), both scholars also quote William Hamilton, who wrote in 1842:

[56] James Braid, *The Discovery of Hypnosis: The Complete Writings of James Braid, the Father of Hypnotherapy* (National Council of Hypnotherapy, 2008), 39.

> What we are conscious of is constructed out of what we are not conscious of. Our whole knowledge in fact is made up of the unknown and of the incognizable. There are many things which we neither know nor can know in themselves, but which manifest themselves indirectly through the medium of their cognitive effects. We are thus constrained to admit, as modifications of mind, what are not phenomena of consciousness [...].[57]

Carpenter and Laycock therefore arrive at the conclusion that paralysis of one's will (through hypnosis or otherwise) simply leads the unconscious processes to become more visible and foregrounded.

Carpenter's and Laycock's assertions resonated with anxieties first aroused by La Mettrie's radical and largely (although not completely) dismissed claim almost a century earlier that man was a machine, not dissimilar to a master clock. Carpenter's and Laycock's "mechanization" of the brain through extension of reflexes into its domain therefore led to strengthened anxieties about the threatened existence of the soul, as well as the now questioned idea of free will and the possibility of personal accountability for one's actions in general. These concerns are at the center of Dostoevsky's discussions of the Kairova and Kornilova's cases, as well as his resistance *The Brothers Karamazov* to a pure medical pathologization of Alesha illness. In his *Principles of Mental Physiology* (1874), translated into Russian in 1877 as

[57] Carpenter, 518. Translated into Russian as: "сознаем, что все наше знание в сущности составляется из неизвестного и несознаваемого нами... Есть множество вещей, которых мы не знаем и не можем знать самих по себе, но которые проявляют свое существование косвенным образом, в виде результатов. Таковы разбираемые нами умственные видоизменения: сами по себе они не открываются нашему сознанию; но так как известные, сознанные нами факты предполагают необходимость существования этих видоизменений и влияния их на умственные процессы, мы принуждены допустить их, как водоизменения, представляющие явления бессознательности." Karpenter, 86.

Osnovaniia fiziologii uma, Carpenter summarizes the dominant viewpoints in conflict between the so-called "materialist" and "spiritualist" schools. According to the former, man is the product of his initially given biology and of his subsequent external circumstances and environment. His body, and by extension brain, in turn, constitutes or manifests in what we think of as soul or psychic activity. With this view, biology drives consciousness, and personal responsibility for one's actions is meaningless. The spiritualist school, however, argued that the soul is an independent, non-physical, superior entity that merely uses the body for accomplishing its purposes. In this view, therefore, the body cannot determine or change the soul; instead, it can only dim or partially distort its manifestation. From this perspective, one must be fully accountable for her actions, since the body is only a vehicle of the independent soul.[58] This scientific and philosophical debate constitutes the main backdrop in Chapter Two for Dostoevsky's resistance to the rigid binary it implies. As we will see, Dostoevsky pushes beyond this strict divide and instead proposes an alternative in which both body and mind influence one another, with free will and choice at the center of these mutual interactions.

Memory

As with the concept of the unconscious, present-day memory theories tend to be retrospectively imported into analyses of nineteenth-century texts, thus obscuring or fully erasing the important differences in the memory sciences of that time. Although mid-nineteenth-century mental scientists had not yet discovered the underlying mechanisms behind remembering and forgetting (which happened only with Pierre Janet and Sigmund Freud), the period was nonetheless strongly preoccupied with questions of memory. The benign view of the

[58] Karpenter, 1–8.

unconscious at mid-century, with its accompanying belief in the "universal storage" of impressions by the mind, gradually became replaced, as the century unfolded, by a more negative view of the unconscious as an "atavistic" storehouse of man's earlier stages of evolutionary development and of their accompanying "primitive" impulses. The concept of collective memory (memory of the species as a whole), in turn, became increasingly physiologized and associated with heredity and degeneration. The latter was a pseudo-scientific theory (first popularized in by Auguste Benedict Morel in the early 1850s, and later by Cesare Lombroso and Max Nordau) that argued that the mentally ill, criminals, and other "social deviants" were "evolutionary throwbacks," so-called victims of "devolution," or of a process that, instead of moving forward like evolution, moved backwards, eventually resulting in infertility and the dying out of the affected family lines.[59] Finally, and most importantly for my project, a significant development in conceptualizations of individual memory led to the birth of the theory of "organic memory" — a scientific view that one's experiences (including those that were wounding, not only physically, but emotionally as well) could be "imprinted" directly on the nervous system itself, and not necessarily experienced or stored in the brain. I examine this mode of remembering with Alesha's physical reliving of his mother's memory in Chapter Three.

[59] For more on degeneration, see Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, c.1848–c.1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Bénédict Auguste Morel, *Traité des dégénérescences physiques, intellectuelles, et morales de l'espèce humaine et des causes qui produisent ces variétés maladives* (Paris: Baillière, 1857); Cesare Lombroso, *The Man of Genius* (London: Walter Scott, 1891). Also see Cesaro Lombroso's works in Russian translation: Chezare Lombrozo, *Bezumie prezhde i teper'* (Odessa: N. Leinenberg, 1897); *Genial'nost i pomeshatel'stvo: Parallel' mezhdu velikimi liud'mi i pomeshannymi,* trans. K. Tetiushinova (St. Petersburg: F. Pavlenkov, 1885); *Zhenshchina prestupnitsa i prostitutka,* trans. G.I. Gordon (Kiev: F.A. Ioganson, 1897). In addition, see Maks Nordau, *Sobranie sochinenii Maksa Nordau v 12-ti tomakh,* 2nd ed., trans. V.N. Mikhailov (Kiev: B.K. Fuks, 1904).

The interest in the unconscious processes earlier, at mid-century, led to the acceptance of the idea that the mind stored all impressions and did not forget, despite the fact that some memories and impressions may not always (or ever) be accessible to consciousness. Describing memory, for example, George Henry Lewes famously used the model of the palimpsest, or a surface that was continually inscribed with new impressions, with older memories becoming less discernible, yet always, remaining closely by.[60] Henry Maudsley, in turn, in his 1870 lectures in London (translated into Russian in 1871) also asserted that memory is eternal and none of the initial impressions become erased. Although some of those impressions are inaccessible to recall, he claimed, specific extraordinary circumstances, such as fever or injury, have the power to bring those memories back to conscious awareness.[61]

The idea that impressions were not erased and were permanently stored in the unconscious, however, came under increasing attack starting with the 1860s. Frances Power Cobbe's 1867 essay "The Fallacies of Memory," which was introduced into Russian most notably through its discussion in the translation of Carpenter's *Principles of Mental Physiology,* argued at length that, far from being the "engraved tablet, treasured in the recesses of the mind," memory is instead always at least partly fictional in its recounting, as well as prone to both voluntary and involuntary distortions.[62] Furthermore, she adds that "we remember, not the things themselves, but the first recollection of them, and then the second and then the third, always the latest

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[60] George Henry Lewes, *Problems of Life and Mind* (London: Truebner, 1879), I: 291.

[61] Modsli, *Ob otnosheniiakh,* 18.

[62] Translated as "*bluzhdaniia pamiati*"; Karpenter, 28–29; Frances Power Cobbe, "The Fallacies of Memory," *The Galaxy,* 15 May 1865, 103–105.

recollection of them," thus further stressing the mutability of recollection and uncannily anticipating the False Memory Syndrome debates of the 1990s.[63]

William Carpenter, in turn, in part agreeing with Cobbe in his assertion that not every impression is probably stored in memory, proceeded to delineate three main ways that impressions were stored: (1) states of mind became impressed as a matter of habit in childhood; (2) modes of thought formed and were stored as a result of associations; and (3) storage due to "single experiences of peculiar force and vividness, which are likely to have left very decided 'traces,' although the circumstances of their formation were so unusual as to keep them out of ordinary associational remembrance."[64] Alesha's intense, and as I later demonstrate — traumatic, childhood memory of his mother, for example, would fit into Carpenter's third category of memory imprinting. Similarly to Maudsley and others, Carpenter believed that extraordinary circumstances, like fever or brain injury, bring to consciousness heretofore unconscious material by re-activating the actual memory "imprints" on the brain itself.[65]

One of the most interesting developments in the memory sciences during this period involved the birth of the concept of "organic memory" (so termed by the psychologist Theodule Ribot), which is at the center of my discussion of Alesha's physical reenactment of his mother's fit (Chapter Three). Ribot identified two main types of memory: psychological and organic. The former referred to what was commonly thought of as memory, or to the associational process of recollection subject to conscious will. Organic memory, in turn, was similar to the psychological,

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[63] Ibid.

[64] Carptenter, 453–54; Karpenter, 26.

[65] Karpenter, 11–13.

but functioned without the participation of consciousness.[66] Ultimately, and more radically, Ribot argued that memory was not simply stored in the brain, but instead was localized in the nervous system, with every impression leaving a molecular trace.[67] This notion is also upheld by Maudsley's claim that every cell has memory.[68] Recollection, according to Ribot, therefore re-animated the actual body parts affected by the original past event. He describes such memory as "the acquired movements which constitute the memory of different organs — the eyes, hands, arms, and legs," adding that "[a] rich and extensive memory is not a collection of impressions, but an accumulation of dynamical associations."[69] More importantly, Ribot eventually goes on to add that memory is "a biological act: it is an impregnation" of experience directly on the various organs (tissues, muscles, including, but not necessarily, the brain).[70] Ribot's theories therefore imply that impressions could be left as both conscious memory and as direct "imprints" on the nervous system itself.

The latter possibility in particular, as I demonstrate in Chapter Three, highlights a crucial distinction between this nineteenth-century mode of conceptualizing both memory and psychic injury from that of today's, with the latter's emphasis on narrativization for recovery from trauma. In conceptualizations of organic memory, the individual physically relives, instead of representing, the former wounding experience, and the body becomes a site of testimony that

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[66] Teodiul' Ribo, *Pamiat' v ee normal'nom i boleznennom* sostoianiiakh, 3rd ed., trans. Vladimir V. Abolenskii (St. Petersburg: V.I. Gubinskii, 1912), 13.

[67] Ibid, 19 and 21.

[68] Modsli, *Ob otnosheniiakh,* 16–17.

[69] Theodule Ribot, *Diseases of Memory: An Essay in the Positive Psychology* (London: K. Paul, Trench, 1882), 31.

[70] Ibid*,* 196. Also, Ribo, 5–6.

provides unmediated access to the events of the past without their mental representation or direct participation of the brain. When Alesha relives his mother's fit, he therefore has a direct access to his mother's wounding experiences, which he inherited and re-experiences directly through the body.

As I have shown so far, nineteenth-century assumptions about the nature of the nervous system served as the foundation for the period's theorizations of the unconscious and memory. The economic conceptualization of the nervous system, the relative autonomy of the individual nerves (from uni-directional dominance by the brain), heredity, and degeneration all emerge as central concepts in understanding key aspects of not only the unconscious and memory, but of psychic experience more generally. The same concepts are thus pivotal to the theorization of the shock spectrum, discussed briefly earlier in this chapter. Having examined the period's key theories about the nervous system, I now will revisit the two ends of the shock spectrum — the hysteric and the neurasthenic — in order to explore some key underlying assumptions about the two constructs before investigating them in the literary case studies of Chapters Three and Four, respectively.

As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, conceptualizations of nineteenth-century shock depended on assumptions about the need for timely processing of external stimuli by the nervous system and the latter's maintenance of adequate nervous force for its operation. The hysteric end of the shock spectrum was defined by the system's inability to process the stimuli in time, becoming overwhelmed as a result. The neurasthenic end, in turn, was characterized by a physical (although not always locatable) lesion on the nervous system that resulted from nervous depletion. Although the two ends of the spectrum are a convenient way to categorize shock-

related pathologies in theory, they were not nearly as neat and well-differentiated in practice. As I show in the following two sections, hysteria and neurasthenia functioned as "umbrella diagnoses" that involved substantial diagnostic slippage among the various nervous conditions on the spectrum, as well as between hysteria and neurasthenia themselves. As I demonstrate below, gender, race, class, and other biases also played key roles in diagnostic assumptions.

Hysteria

Both hysteria and neurasthenia in the second half of the nineteenth century encapsulated a plethora of diverse symptoms and, as functional diseases, shared a distinct lack of physiologically detectable causes. Hysteria, with its Classical roots in Ancient Greece, was originally thought to affect only women, as its name — "wandering womb" — suggests. By the second half of the nineteenth century, however, the disease had been re-interpreted in terms of the malfunctioning nervous system, in part due to the burgeoning work in the fields of neurophysiology and, later in the century, due to the increasing evidence that both men and children were susceptible to this illness as well.

The complex symptomatology of the disease came to include three major categories: symptoms affecting the personality and the character of the patient; symptoms manifesting in the psychological sphere; and symptoms affecting the nervous system. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the scientific community upheld the belief in a so-called "hysterical personality type." Like Alesha Karamazov, this hysterical character was marked by the predominance of emotional and sensitive, as opposed to intellectual, qualities of character. The hysteric was also, similarly to Alesha, thought to be excessively impressionable and prone to unstable, frequently changing moods. She (despite the admission that men and children were

susceptible, the overwhelming majority of sufferers were still female) had a highly developed imagination and was excessively impulsive. Her personality included ethical defects, such as constant dissatisfaction with her environment, tendencies toward exhibitionism, malingering, lying, cruelty, as well as "eccentric" behavior in general. The sufferer's intellect and memory, however, could be highly developed.

Her psychological symptoms, in turn, could include three types of mental dysfunction: the nebulous category of general psychosis; prolonged, or chronic, mental disturbances; or short-term (episodic) mental disturbances. The category of general psychosis primarily included less pronounced, yet persistent, conditions like melancholia and mania, whereas the chronic mental illness often involved persistent, highly pronounced conditions that frequently involved manifestations of "character defects," discussed earlier. These defects were also often connected with various forms of "sexual perversions." The category of short-term mental disturbances in hysteria, in turn, included more acute, fleeting psychotic episodes, which, similarly to Alesha's intense religious experiences and fits, could often be accompanied by seizures, religious or sexual ecstasy, as well as hallucinations.

The sensorimotor system, in turn, was thought to be affected through various losses of sensation throughout the body and through neuralgic pains, including headaches and migraines. This category of symptoms also manifested in seizures and fits of various severity and duration (hysteria was also closely associated with epilepsy during this time), as well as limb contractions and paralysis, and loss or limitations of speech.[71]

[71] *ES,* XIII: 464–68; N.A. Semashko, ed., *Bol'shaia meditsinskaia entsiklopediia* (Moscow: Sovetskaia entsiklopediia, 1928), XI: 800–18. Henceforward, all references to this source will be

Although physiologically detectable causes of hysteria were unknown, its source was first and foremost connected with heredity and, with the presence of underlying susceptibility, the disease could supposedly manifest itself without an exogenic trigger. In addition, the general scientific consensus believed many cases of hysteria to be a manifestation of degeneration (*vyrozhdenie*).

Closer to the end of the century, however, the rest of the population, who did not have latent susceptibility to hysteria, also became to be believed vulnerable to the disease. Otherwise perfectly healthy individuals could supposedly become hysterical due to various sexual problems (sexual excesses with men; excessive excitement without satisfaction for both sexes; various "sexual deviations" in attempts to prevent pregnancy) and, most importantly for this study, through various "psychological shocks" ("*psikhologicheskie potriaseniia*").[72] Alesha's mother's sexual abuse at the hands of his father, for example, as well as the latter's desecration of religious symbols dear to her, served as the "psychological shocks" that contributed to the "encoding" of the disease in her nervous system. Factors like physical depletion, anemia, and inadequate diet, on the other hand, were thought to contribute to the development of the disease, but were believed to be insufficient as its sole causes.

Neurasthenia

On the opposite side of the hysteric over-excitement end of the shock spectrum lay "neurasthenic" nervous depletion. Neurasthenia made its appearance in the medical and popular

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listed as *"BME,"* followed by volume and page numbers (i.e. *BME,* XI: 800–18.). Also see Mark Micale, *Approaching Hysteria: Disease and Its Interpretations* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995); among numerous other sources.

[72] *ES*, XIII: 464–68; *BME*, XI: 800–18.

scene in the late 1860s with the work of the American neurologist George Beard. The condition was connected with the conception of the body as a nerveo-electrical organism with a limited amount of energy available for dealing with the impressions of external stimuli. Beard's early work tended to focus on neurasthenia as a physical nerve lesion resulting from exhaustion. Eventually, however, he transitioned to an exclusively economic model, in which the individual becomes overwhelmed due to the level and speed of the external stimuli.[73]

In his 1869 article in the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal,* Beard defines neurasthenia as an illness characterized by the depletion of the "nervous force"[74] and giving rise to a diverse range of symptoms, including dyspepsia, insomnia, headaches, neuralgia, and menstrual irregularities, among others.[75] The causes of the disease, however, remained unknown, with Beard speculating that the nervous system somehow becomes "dephosphorized" or "loses somewhat of its solid constituents," a process that is in turn connected with undetectable chemical changes that affect both the quality and the quantity of the nervous force.[76]

As Beard's work progressed, neurasthenia acquired more and more symptoms, while ostensibly continuing to lack a physiological explanation. Eventually, Beard's treatise swept over

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[73] M.B. Macmillan, "Beard's Concept of Neurasthenia and Freud's Concept of the Actual Neuroses," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 12.4 (1976), 379.

[74] George M. Beard, "Neurasthenia, or Nervous Exhaustion, " *Boston Medical Surgical Journal* 3 (1869), 217.

[75] George M. Beard, *A Practical Treatise on Nervous Exhaustion (Neurasthenia), Its Symptoms, Nature, Sequences, Treatment,* 2nd ed. (New York: W. Wood, 1880), 109.

[76] Ibid.

Europe, after it was translated into German in 1881[77] and into Russian shortly thereafter.[78] By the end of the nineteenth century, the Russian medical community saw neurasthenia as a disease with extremely complex symptomatology, affecting the psychic, as well as the sensori-motor systems. In the psychic sphere, for example, neurasthenia was believed to manifest in frequent negative moods, coupled with fear and various *idées fixes*. It could also result in short attention spans and sleep disturbances. In the sensory sphere, neurasthenia supposedly led to various painful sensations throughout the body, including potential wandering neuralgic pains in the back, legs, and arms. The neurasthenic motor system, in turn, was characterized by slowness and weakness of movement, premature tiredness, and, similarly to hysteria, various sexual dysfunctions. The disease always had a chronic manifestation and developed very slowly, which provided a partial explanation for the difficulty of finding its initial trigger.

Similarly to hysteria, the disease's origins were first and foremost associated with heredity, followed by psychic exhaustion and an "incorrect" sexual life style. Psychic depletion had particularly strong ties to the urban environment, with its many everyday "modern shocks," and with the professional worker classes, who engaged in intellectual, as opposed to physical, labor. Unlike hysteria, which was overwhelmingly associated with women, degeneration, and issues of heredity and predisposition, neurasthenia, although associated with most of those issues, was nonetheless seen as a less stigmatized, more respectable condition. This social divide, for example, became particularly visible in World War I diagnoses of British shell-shocked soldiers: whereas the foot soldiers were often diagnosed with hysteria and malingering, receiving

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[77] George M. Beard, *Die Nervenschwaeche (Neurasthenia), Ihre Symptome, Natur, Folgezustaende und Behandlung* (Leipzig: F.W.C. Fogel, 1881).

[78] Dzhordzh Miller Bird, *Slabonervnost' (Nevrasteniia, Nevrozism): Ee simptomy, sushchnost' i lechenie* (St. Petersburg: K. Rikker, 1881).

often painful, physiologically-based treatments like electroshock, the officers were more frequently diagnosed with neurasthenia, with the underlying assumption that the mental stress and responsibility of their positions eventually led to the manifestations of the disease. The officers often received rest, recuperation, and "the talking cure" for their rehabilitation.[79] This trend is largely indicative of the diagnostic and conceptual slippage between hysteria and neurasthenia (as well as the various "sub-diseases" both entailed). Thus, what may come across as a neat, clear-cut division in the context of the organizing principle of the shock spectrum with the hysteric and neurasthenic ends, was in fact a diagnostic situation that involved many overlapping symptoms and often relied (both implicitly and explicitly) on gender, racial, and class biases.

In addition to psychic exhaustion associated with mental, professional labor, neurasthenia could also be brought on by various (often unidentified in the literature) "moral shocks" (*moral'nye potriaseniia*), as well as physical injuries that were accompanied by fear (such as railroad accidents, for example). The diagnosis was applied overwhelmingly to men, although the disease also had an assumed underlying applicability to the modern humanity at large. As I show in Chapter Four, anyone living in the so-called "Nervous Age" could either be already affected or in danger of being so.

Although the original, American conceptualization of neurasthenia associated the disease with a general weakening of the nervous system, which in turn led to more serious illnesses, European and Russian versions of neurasthenia differed in a significant way. Both European and

[79] For more on the topic, see Elaine Showalter, "Male Hysteria: W.H.R. Rivers and the Lessons of Shellshock," in *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830–1980* (London: Virago, 1987), 167–279.

Russian scientists overwhelmingly focused on the joint effects of neurasthenia and degeneration, both of which in their view went hand-in-hand. This conceptualization led to a multi-generational view of the effects of the disease, resulting in a generalized anxiety about the long-term well-being of the nation. In theory, therefore, the cure from neurasthenia was potentially available for the American patient in his lifetime. By contrast, the Russian and European sufferers were seen in terms of generational lines of transmission and in the greater national context.[80]

Russian Sciences of the Mind and Literature

After having explored the neurological understandings of shock and its related concepts and before turning to their representations in nineteenth-century Russian literature, a series of questions arise: To what extent are the generally accepted European theories on the subject at hand relevant to the Russian case? In other words, what relationship did nineteenth-century Russian mental sciences have to its European counterparts? In addition, what relationship did Russian sciences of the mind have to the country's literary fiction and what light might an investigation of the period's literature shed on some of the debates surrounding shock? To address these questions, I turn to the final section of this chapter, in which I demonstrate that Russian sciences of the mind were part of a pan-European scientific community. The country's scientific scene not only represented a curious amalgamation of the leading trends in Western European sciences, but also contained a vibrant scientific tradition of its own. Nineteenth-century Russian literature, in turn, was the main public venue in which the philosophical and ethical implications surrounding the various scientific discoveries were discussed. At the same time,

[80] For a further discussion, see Laura Goering, "Russian Nervousness: Neurasthenia and National Identity in Nineteenth-Century Russia," *Medical History* 47:1 (January 2003), 23–46.

however, literature also provided the rich subjective psychological content that served as grounds for investigation for the mental sciences. As I show in Chapter Four, both scientists of the mind and literary writers eventually found themselves in competition with one another over claims for authoritative knowledge of Russian psychic health.

As I mentioned briefly in the Introduction, nineteenth-century medical and historical materials demonstrate that, during this period, Russia both belonged to the greater European scientific community and boasted a robust scientific tradition of its own. It was not uncommon, for example, for major scientific issues of the time to be discussed vigorously in the so-called "thick," as well as popular, journals and for translations of major European scientific works to appear in Russian shortly after their original publications. The same applied to lectures and public talks by notable European scholars. Furthermore, it was common for many Russian scientists to receive their education and training abroad, often retaining valuable professional connections and correspondences throughout their lives. The connection between the Russian and European scientific traditions became even more strong starting with the 1860s, when, after the country's humiliating defeat by the British in the Crimean War, Czar Alexander II realized the inferiority of Russia's technological development and instituted a series of substantial liberal reforms that encouraged increased intellectual exchange with the rest of Europe.

In addition to being well informed about the most recent European scientific advancements, Russia had a vigorous scientific tradition of its own, which included the mental sciences. The first courses on mental and nervous illness, for example, began in Moscow and Kazan' as early as 1837. The Medical-Surgical Academy in St. Petersburg, in turn, saw the establishment of the first department of psychiatry in 1857 and the opening of a department

devoted solely to the study of mental and nervous illnesses in 1860. The first professional association of psychiatrists in Russia was established in 1862, with the first national congress of psychiatrists taking place in 1887 and the creation of the first scientific journal devoted to psychiatry in 1883. One of the best-known examples of Russia's achievements in the field of neurophysiology, in turn, is the pioneering research of Ivan M. Sechenov in the 1860s and his publication of "Reflexes of the Brain" (1863) in *The Contemporary.* The tradition established by his work continued at Moscow University and the Medical-Surgical Academy in St. Petersburg, with the latter institution eventually becoming the first to transition from purely theoretical research on neuropathology to practical work. Other institutions in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Khar'kov, Warsaw, Kiev, and Kazan' followed suit shortly, turning to active research in their teaching clinics by the 1880s.[81]

Two characteristic differences made the Russian mental sciences stand apart from its European counterparts, however: their strong politicization and special relationship with literary fiction. The tendency to see a natural alliance between science and the push for liberal reforms became particularly prominent during the "physiological materialism" debates of the 1860s. Neurophysiology in particular, as opposed to its "softer" mental science siblings psychology and psychiatry, was seen as especially powerful in its potential to improve society and aid in Russia's attempts to create a new morality for the country. Neurophysiology's connection with medicine,

[81] Tikhon I. Iudin, *Ocherki istorii otechestvennoi psikhiatrii* (Moscow: Medgiz, 1951), 462–65; Kh. S. Koshtoiants, *Essays on the History of Physiology in Russia* (Washington: American Institute of Biological Sciences, 1964), 126–42; Sirotkina, *Diagnosing Literary Genius,* 11–12.

as well as its successes with treating various neurological conditions and the more spectacular discovery of anesthesia made it seem as the more potent ally.[82]

The politicization of the Russian mental sciences is also in part explained by the difficult working conditions of and bids for professional authority by the country's psychiatrists. In contrast to their European counterparts, the status of the Russian psychiatrists was much less prestigious throughout the nineteenth century. For example, there was a bitter rivalry between the psychiatrists and the general physicians. The psychiatrists were often subordinated to the physicians in the asylum system, which led to sustained resentment. The physicians, in turn, felt threatened by the narrowing of their field of authority because of the psychiatrists' strong push towards professionalization.[83]

The difficult working conditions of the psychiatrists, however, paradoxically resulted in relative job security and greater ability to express political dissatisfaction. The horrific conditions of asylum work, isolation in provincial posts, and the low pay that most Russian psychiatrists had to endure, ensured that the number of the professionals in the field was very limited and job security for the most part assured. The psychiatrists' special relationship to the Russian government also played a role in developing their strong, vocal liberal convictions. In Europe, for example, the nineteenth century saw the push by the European governments to control the qualifications of the psychiatrists' predecessors and eliminate the dangers associated with quackery. In Russia, however, from the onset, the profession was created, funded, and regulated

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[82] For further discussion of this phenomenon see David Joravsky, *Russian Psychology: A Critical History* (Oxford, U.K.: Blackwell, 1988), 55–60.

[83] Julie V. Brown, "The Professionalization of Russian Psychiatry, 1857–1911," PhD Diss. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1981), 308–24.

by the State. As they sought greater professional development, psychiatrists increasingly pushed for more and more independence, which arguably further contributed to their politicization, liberalism, and general anti-government attitudes.[84]

The same liberal reforms that contributed to the burgeoning developments in the sciences and to increased openness in the political sphere also encouraged similar growth in literature. As I argue in more depth later, developments in Russia's scientific and literary production are intimately related and mutually dependent on one another, with both, in turn, strongly connected to Russia's nineteenth-century quest to explain the human soul and attempts to find a new morality for the country.

As mentioned briefly in the Introduction, Russia, more so than any other European country, demonstrates the fallacy of previous scholarly assumptions about the relationship between science and literature in the nineteenth century. Scholars of Victorian British fiction's engagement with Darwinism, for example, in the last couple of decades began to dismantle the myth of active scientific production of knowledge and literature's supposedly passive response of incorporation and further engagement with already established scientific theories in the nineteenth century. Instead, they convincingly argue that both literature and the sciences were part of a greater, more inclusive intellectual milieu, with contributions by both influencing one another and with literature at times even making way for future scientific explorations.[85]

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[84] For additional information, see the many works by Julie V. Brown, especially "Revolution and Psychosis: The Mixing of Science and Politics in Russian Psychiatric Medicine, 1905–13," *Russian Review* 46.3 (1987), 283–302 and "The Professionalization of Russian Psychiatry."

[85] See Gillian Beer's *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot, and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (Boston: Routledge and Keagan Paul, 1983), for example, or George

These assumptions are particularly valid in the Russian context due to the iconic status of the country's literature in the eyes of Russians. The nineteenth-century author and social reformer Nikolai Chernyshevskii, for example, famously described Russian literature as defined by a grave social mission that rested exclusively on its shoulders, since, unlike in Western Europe, other segments of Russian society were not in a position to help. Chernyshevsky's stance echoes the general intellectual sentiments of the time and underscores the special mission of the Russian author. In this view, the Russian writer (and by extension the literary critic) took on the role of a prophetic social activist, responsible for foreseeing the country's possible futures and for reflecting to the public the present reality. He became both a moral guide and the voice of dissent, with the obligation to share his insights with the rest of the country, no matter the cost. If he did not carry on his "mission," supposedly, no one else in the country was in a position to do so.

The prestige and veneration of the literary author as the voice of conscience and the vehicle for social change during the Golden Age of Russian literature is successfully rivaled by none, although that competition itself must be taken into account in discussions of the scientific and social efforts of mental scientists — psychiatrists and psychologists in particular. As Irina Sirotkina, among others, points out, Russian psychiatrists at the end of the century were in a competition with the literary authors, for authority and status as the "great investigators of the human soul."[86] Some psychiatrists, for example, attempted to align themselves with the efforts of

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Henry Levine's *Darwin and the Novelists: Patterns of Science in Victorian Fiction* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989). Also, see Sirotkina, *Diagnosing Literary Genius,* 8–9.

[86] Sirotkina, *Diagnosing Literary Genius,* 7–8.

literary criticism of the time by writing literary pathographies, thus partaking in the prestige associated with literary creation and joining the already existent effort for social change.[87]

At the same time, however, other psychiatrists saw themselves in direct competition with the writers, attempting to assert scientific superiority in investigations of the human mind and behavior. Interestingly enough, psychiatric writing in both camps tended to mirror opinions of the literary critics when it came to major trends in judging the authors' work. Fedor Dostoevsky provides the most clear and famous example of this convergence in assessment trends: the alternating periods of condemnation and praises of his personal life and literary work well into Soviet times tended to coincide in the camps of the literary critics and psychiatrists. Tellingly, a psychiatrist's engagement with Dostoevsky's work also provides one of the most famous examples of a modification of an existing scientific theory under the influence of literary production. At the end of the nineteenth century, the eminent psychiatrist Nikolai Bazhenov chose to discard a significant part of the then dominant theory of degeneration after his analysis of Dostoevsky's literary works and created the theory of progeneration for geniuses instead.[88]

Conclusion

As this chapter demonstrates, theorizations of nineteenth-century psychic wounding differ significantly from its present-day conceptualizations. Historically sensitive analysis of the period's literature therefore cannot rely solely on retroactive application of present-day trauma theory. Instead, such an analysis must take into account the two periods' differences in conceptualizations of both memory and the unconscious, as well as differentiate the

[87] Ibid, 71.

[88] Ibid.

neurologically-dependent concepts of nineteenth-century shock from post–Freudian trauma as a psychogenic wound of the mind. Ultimately, nineteenth-century theories of psychic injury provide insight into important precursors to contemporary trauma theory and shed light onto alternative experiences of memory and re-enactment. Investigation of shock also provides insight into a predominantly physiological and chronic conceptualization of psychic injury that does not necessarily privilege the brain and instead relies on the nervous system at large. We turn to the literary case studies, in order to examine these central concepts more closely and to investigate their cultural manifestations in literature.

CHAPTER TWO

BODILY WILLFULNESS: INTENTIONALITY AND THE UNCONSCIOUS IN DOSTOEVSKY'S *A WRITER'S DIARY*

> "It seems an easy thing to distinguish a voluntary from an involuntary action; and yet this seemingly easy thing sorely perplexes the cunning of philosophy. […] Positive as we may be that some actions have a volitional element, we are at a loss to mark out what that element is."[89]

As we saw in Chapter One, modern day theories of trauma differ significantly from nineteenth-century theories of shock, and one of those crucial differences lies in nineteenth-century theories of the unconscious. As I have demonstrated, the (post)Freudian conceptualizations of the unconscious, and the mechanism of repression in particular, are central to present-day considerations of trauma. Nineteenth-century theories of the unconscious, however, in large part grew out of the tremendous strides in developments in the theorization of the nervous system. Those earlier theories of the unconscious therefore were primarily physiologically based and differed from the (post)Freudian unconscious in a number of important ways. According to the scientific assumptions of the time, the nineteenth-century psyche lacked the mechanism of repression, and the unconscious did not contain material banished from consciousness by the super ego (literary writers, like Dostoevsky, however, did

[89] Lewes, *The Physiology of Common Life,* 197.

not necessarily follow these scientific assumptions in their fiction). Furthermore, as the second half of the nineteenth century continued to unfold, theories of the unconscious in Europe and Russia increasingly combined with theories of degeneration, leading to widely accepted formulations of the collective unconscious, which were also primarily biologically based and were closely tied to issues of national character, gender, and class.[90]

In this chapter, I further investigate nineteenth century theories of the unconscious by using Dostoevsky's *A Writer's Diary* (1876–1881) as a literary case study. I focus specifically on Dostoevsky's engagement with the famous court cases of Anastasia Kairova and Ekaterina Kornilova, in which medical expert testimony and the female defendants' states of mind played a prominent role in the trials and in their sensationalized coverage in the press. Dostoevsky's engagement with questions of what constitutes conscious and unconscious states, intent, and one's subsequent responsibility for her actions reveals a complex stance that at times comes across as self-contradictory. The author decries the influence and implications of the then popular "environmental theory" (*teoriia sredy)* in one piece, for example, adamantly insisting on the importance of personal responsibility and accountability for one's actions, only to come to the defense of Kornilova later, using her female biology and the effects of pregnancy as an explanation for her crime.

As I demonstrate in this chapter, Dostoevsky does not reject the relevance of sciences of the mind for explanations of human behavior, but neither does he fully embrace those (mostly western) theories. Aware of the most recent developments in the mental sciences, Dostoevsky deviates in the conclusions he draws from them. While mental sciences of the time, for example,

[90] For the differentiation of the nineteenth-century unconscious from its (post)Freudian counterpart(s), see pages 35–42 of this work.

viewed women and the peasantry in particular as evolutionarily inferior to the "civilized" man — as more instinctual, primitive, weak-willed and, in the long run, doomed to their biology — Dostoevsky acknowledges the influence of biology, but emphasizes the exceptionality of that influence and repeatedly stresses the importance and power of personal choice.

Whereas the predominant scientific views of the unconscious in the late nineteenth century stress the negative, animalistic, even atavistic nature of unconscious drives, Dostoevsky insists that the latter can be both positive and negative, both elevating and debasing. In his views on the unconscious, Dostoevsky privileges the soul as the ultimate source of consciousness and of one's elevating unconscious drives, but also acknowledges rare cases in which the body affects consciousness and the mind, with potential to deprive the individual of her freedom of choice. Ultimately, Dostoevsky's perspective problematizes the strict spiritualist/materialist divide in late nineteenth-century views on the unconscious and simultaneously resonates with the romantic psychology of C.G. Carus of the 1840s and the later work of Alexander Bain and William Benjamin Carpenter of the 1870s.

Dostoevsky and Sciences of the Mind

Before going forward with the analysis, however, I need to contextualize my own approach to Dostoevsky's work in this project. My focus on one specific aspect of Dostoevsky's literary and journalistic work — on the intersection between western scientific views of the mind and Dostoevsky's own, at times differing perspective on the psyche — leads me both to a number of advantages, but also problems. As scholars like Malcolm Jones, Aileen Kelly, Nancy Ruttenburg, and, most recently, Anna Schur, have pointed out over the last three decades, Dostoevsky criticism often tends to suppress the pluralism of his views, despite the widespread

acceptance of the Bakhtinian "polyphony" of his novels.[91] Ruttenburg points out that the temptation to find a single unifying idea in Dostoevsky's multiplicity is still present today.[92] Furthermore, as Kelly asserts, much of the Dostoevsky criticism tends to separate sharply Dostoevsky the artist from Dostoevsky the man, with the latter assumed to possess a stable, clear opinion on the issues his characters often debate in fiction.[93]

In her own project, Kelly challenges this separation of man and artist and convincingly argues that Dostoevsky did not have his characters debate issues that he had already resolved in his own mind, but instead "reflected the chaotic experience of a practicing moralist."[94] Kelly investigates Dostoevsky's simultaneous commitment to both Christianity and rational humanism, for example, arguing that his fiction reveals a "divided conscience."[95] In more recent work, Anna Schur also challenges this strict separation of Dostoevsky's artistic imagination from his supposedly stable ideology by investigating his views on and literary representations of punishment. Schur argues that despite his well-known commitment to Christian ideals, it was at times difficult for Dostoevsky to rely on them for practical imperatives. "[N]o matter how

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[91] Malcolm V. Jones, *Dostoyevsky: The Novel of Discord* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 37–38; Aileen Kelly, "Dostoevskii and the Divided Conscience," *Slavic Review* 47.2 (1988), 239–60.

[92] Nancy Ruttenburg, *Dostoevsky's Democracy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008), 1–29.

[93] Kelly, 239–60; also for this argument see Robin Feuer Miller, *Dostoevsky's Unfinished Journey* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2007), xiii–xvii; for an overview of various stances on Dostoevsky's relationship between art and ideology (especially related to his views on the Jews), see Susan McReynolds, *Redemption and the Merchant God: Dostoevsky's Economy of Salvation and Antisemitism* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2008), 17–18 and 206.

[94] Kelly, 242.

[95] As Kelly's title ("Dostoevskii and the Divided Conscience") indicates.

important Dostoevsky's religion was for his overall outlook," Schur asserts, "it did not always put to rest the many conflicting considerations clamoring for his recognition."[96] Furthermore, scholars like Steven Cassedy, Susan McReynolds, Malcolm Jones, as well as others, have recently demonstrated that Dostoevsky's "religion" is a much more complicated matter than we have often thought.[97]

In this project, I follow both Kelly's and Schur's lead in terms of my rejection of the strict separation of Dostoevsky the artist and Dostoevsky the man, as well as my focus on a single aspect of his work — the intersection between western scientific views of the mind and Dostoevsky's own perspective on the psyche. In doing so, I in no way wish to argue against the importance of Christian ideals in Dostoevsky's views and work. I believe that certain aspects of Dostoevsky's views on the psyche, and consciousness in particular, indeed cannot be understood without resorting to the framework of Christianity. Like Kelly and Schur, however, I insist that Christian ideals cannot account for all of Dostoevsky's views, and they do not settle all the conflicting diverse opinions that the author holds, as he wrestles with his evolving stances on numerous moral and philosophical questions. As Robert Belknap, among others, has pointed out, Dostoevsky was an avid reader, who "read everything he could, good or bad, published or

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[96] Anna Shchur, *Wages of Evil: Dostoevsky and Punishment* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2012), 7.

[97] Steven Cassedy, *Dostoevsky's Religion* (Standford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2005); Susan McReynolds, *Redemption and the Merchant God;* Malcolm Jones, *Dostoevsky and the Dynamics of the Religious Experience* (London: Anthem Press, 2005). Also, even more recently, see Rowan Williams, *Dostoevsky: Language, Faith, and Fiction* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2008).

unpublished, by friend or foe."[98] As with his engagement with other topics, Dostoevsky's stances towards the mental sciences of his time and perspectives on the human psyche also came about through this process of encountering diverse sources of information that at times opposed his own views.

As James Rice has demonstrated, medical and mental sciences were a powerful influence on Dostoevsky's fiction, and we need to engage with this dimension of his work in order to understand the various nuances of his arguments.[99] Dostoevsky's engagement with sciences of the mind consistently spans his artistic lifetime, from the pre–Siberian period to his death. His early literary influences, E.T.A. Hoffman and Vladimir Odoevsky, for example, both made liberal use of madness and insanity in their fiction, as well as employing the latest medical and psychiatric terminology related to mental illness in their works. So greatly were they admired by Dostoevsky, that he conceived of an "insanity project" in 1838, which eventually resulted in the publication of *The Double* (1845–1846).

In his post–Siberian novels, Dostoevsky repeatedly returns to the relationship between body and mind, as well as one's physiology and free will. To list but a few representative examples: In *Crime and Punishment* (1866), Dostoevsky reveals that Sonia has read *The Physiology of Common Life* (1859) by the famous physiologist George Henry Lewes, who wrote his volume for the popular audience, as a *tour-de-force* of the major tenets of physiology and the

[98] Robert Belknap, *The Genesis of The Brothers Karamazov: The Aesthetics, Ideology, and Psychology of Making a Text* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1990), 42.

[99] James L. Rice, *Dostoevsky and the Healing Art: An Essay in Literary and Medical History* (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1985), 107–108; also, see his "Dostoevsky's Medical History: Diagnosis and Dialectic," *Russian Review* 42.2 (1983), 131–61.

debates inspired by the field.[100] As Harriet Murav has pointed out, Dostoevsky also criticized the theories of the mathematician A. Quetelet in the novel, which were promulgated in Russia by V.A. Zaitsev and A. Wagner. Both of the latter challenged the idea of free will by ultimately arguing that individual motivation of criminals should be ignored, that said motivation for crime ultimately resulted from the influences of one's environment, and that annual crime rates could be predicted when dealing with large amounts of data with the aid of statistics.[101] Finally, a number of Dostoevsky's contemporaries also lauded him for the creation of a scientifically accurate portrait of a psychopath in the figure of Raskol'nikov.[102]

In *The Idiot* (1869), in turn, Dostoevsky famously (and realistically) explores the effects of epilepsy on Prince Myshkin, at one point having the latter wonder whether the exultation, heightened self-awareness, and near transcendence he experiences before his fits are "not the highest state after all, […] but the lowest instead, […] nothing but an illness, a disturbance of a normal state."[103] The passage refers to the deterministic effects of one's abnormal physiology (in this case, abnormal nervous system) on one's consciousness. Similarly, at the end of *The Devils* (1872), the narrator informs us that, following Stavrogin's suicide, "the medics completely and

[100] L'iuis, *Fiziologiia obydennoi zhizni*. Originally translated into Russian in 1861 and reprinted in 1862. In addition to mentioning that Sonia Marmeladov read the work, Dostoevsky himself owned a copy. L.P. Grossman, *Seminarii po Dostoevskomu* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1922), 46–49; the supplement to Grossman's list in L. Ia. Desiatkina and G.M. Fridlender, *Dostoevskii. Materialy i issledovaniia, Vol. 4* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1980).

[101] Harriet Murav, *Holy Foolishness: Dostoevsky's Novels and the Poetics of Cultural Critique* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1992), 55–56.

[102] Ibid*,* 52.

[103] Part II, chapter 5.

insistently denied the possibility of insanity after performing the autopsy."[104] In this passage Dostoevsky plays with the widely accepted idea at the time that mental illness resulted solely from physiological abnormality, which in turn could be seen in the brain. Furthermore, Dostoevsky has Dmitrii Karamazov criticize the physiological determinism of Claude Bernard's materialism and makes Dmitrii's lawyer use the scientific theories surrounding "temporary insanity" (*affekt*) as part of his defense strategy in court.[105] Last but not least Dostoevsky himself criticized both Bernard's and Sechenov's materialism in his correspondence.[106]

In terms of Dostoevsky's introduction to the world of sciences of the mind, as well as literature on the nervous system and neuropathology in particular, the author's epilepsy played a key role. As Rice demonstrates, Dostoevsky's epilepsy did not in fact start during his time in Siberia, despite the fact that this was the belief widely accepted during his own lifetime and actively cultivated by Dostoevsky himself, as part of his image of a literary prophet. As both Dostoevsky's personal correspondence and records of his friend and doctor Stepan Dmitrievich Ianovskii (1817–1897) indicate, the author's illness preceded his exile, although it was indeed exacerbated during his time in Siberia.[107]

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[104] Book III, chapter 8.

[105] Part IV, chapter 4.

[106] In addition to owning Sechenov's *Refleksy golovnogo mozga* and G.H. Lewes's aforementioned monograph, Dostoevsky also owned copies of works by Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer, and Alexander Bain. For additional details, see Grossman, 46–49, as well as the supplement to Grossman's list in Desiatkina and Fridlender.

[107] Rice, *Dostoevsky and the Healing Art,* 6. For example, Ianovskii reports an epileptic attack as early as 1847, whereas a family legend held that the writer experienced his first attack after learning of the death of his father. Ibid.

Before his exile, Dostoevsky read avidly in the areas of sciences of the mind and neuropathology in particular. During his frequent (for three years, almost daily) meetings with Ianovskii, Dostoevsky did not only consult with him about his own condition, but also borrowed extensively from Ianovskii's library, particularly volumes related to brain pathology, nervous disorders, and psychic illness.[108] Ianovskii himself was well-read on the latest developments in medical literature, and, as Rice points out, it would probably be safe to assume that during numerous hours of their frequent conversations the two men discussed Dostoevsky's thoughts on the borrowed medical literature, as well as Ianovskii's own views on related topics. Furthermore, Dostoevsky's great-uncle Vasilii M. Kotel'nitskii (1769–1844) both translated and published extensively handbooks on recent medical treatises, and Dostoevsky most likely had come into contact with these ideas early in life through him.[109] Finally, the author also at one point secured permission from the tsar to travel abroad in order to see the leading specialists in neuropathology, like Pr. Trousseau, and Doctors Herpin and Romberg, which also indicates further familiarity with the subject area.[110]

By the time Dostoevsky returned from exile and resumed his writing career, the latest medical literature was being translated into Russian and reviewed in the Russian press at much greater frequency. Furthermore, in the post-reform period of Alexander's Russia of the 1860s

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[108] Stepan D. Ianovskii, "Vosponinaniia o Dostoevskom," *Russkii vestnik* 4 (1885), 797–98 and 805–806. Ianovskii's records are particularly useful since we cannot reconstruct Dostoevsky's pre–Siberian library.

[109] M.V. Volotskoi, *Khronika roda Dostoevskogo, 1506–1933* (Moscow: Sever, 1933), 134. Kotel'nitskii was the brother of Dostoevsky's maternal grandmother, who was a professor of pharmacology and medical literature, as well as later the dean of the medical faculty at Moscow University, until he retired in 1835. Of course, Dostoevsky's own father also was a doctor.

[110] Rice, *Dostoevsky and the Healing Art,* 160.

and 1870s, an unlikely venue for dissemination and popularization of the recent advances in sciences of the mind became prominent — the courts. Dostoevsky's interest in Russian court cases, beginning with his journalistic work of the early 1860s, is well documented. What has received less attention, however, is the extent to which the Russian courtroom relied on the medical and psychiatric testimony both for prosecution and defense.

The so-called Great Reforms of the sixties not only led to increased engagement with western scientific ideas and greater professionalization (especially when it came to psychiatry), but also introduced judicial reforms like trial by jury (in 1864) and resulted in significant growth of commercial press. A decade before the infamous Vera Zasulich case of 1878, which was sensationalized in the press in large part because of debates surrounding the accused's state of mind, the courtroom had already become a part of popular culture. Attendance of trials was open to the public and proceedings were reported (and avidly followed) in the press. In the words of Martin Wiener, courtroom trials became "complex social performances in which a variety of scripts may be employed."[111] Lawyers on both sides created narratives — a combination of biography and expert testimony — that inserted the defendant into them and addressed pressing issues of the day. As Louise McReynolds points out, these narrative performances gave public authority and expression to what otherwise would have remained abstract, obscure, intellectual

[111] Martin J. Wiener, "Judges v. Jurors: Courtroom Tensions in Murder Trials and the Law of Criminal Responsibility in Nineteenth-Century England," *Law and History Review* 17.3 (1999), 481.

concepts.[112] Most importantly, the courtrooms, served as a vehicle for the dissemination of expert medical and scientific knowledge and its popularization.

The Diary of a Writer

Although my primary focus in this chapter is on Dostoevsky's engagement with the Kairova and Kornilova court cases in the *Diary,* it is important to situate those pieces in the context of the journal as a whole. Historically, the *Diary* has received less critical attention than the rest of Dostoevsky's work, which has been the case for both Russian and Soviet scholars, as well as their western counterparts. The *Diary's* lesser popularity with critics, however, is in no way reflective of its popularity with readers at the time of its publication. Dostoevsky's one-man journal defied predictions of its contemporaneous critics and became enormously successful, gathering a highly respectable number of subscribers and loyal readers.[113] Furthermore, Dostoevsky did something unusual for his time: he opened up direct channels of communication with his readers, many of whom wrote to him with their thoughts and even visited him in person

[112] Louise McReynolds, "Witnessing for the Defense: The Adversarial Court and Narratives of Criminal Behavior in Nineteenth-Century Russia," *Slavic Review* 69 (2010), 624.

[113] On Dostoevsky's contemporaries' critical response to *The Diary* (including initial predictions for its future success and failure), see Igor L. Volgin, *Dostoevskii — Zhurnalist: Dnevnik pisatelia i russkaia obshchestvennost'"* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo universiteta, 1982), 23–27. On *The Diary's* success with readers, see Igor L. Volgin, "Redaktsionnyi arkhiv *Dnevnika pisatelia* (1876–1877)," in *Russkaia literatura* 1 (1974), 156. Volgin, the first scholar to investigate the publication of *The Diary,* points out that the periodical's circulation vacillated between 4,000 and 6,000 copies a month. By comparison, circulation of journals like *The Cause* did not exceed 5,300–5,500 copies, whereas *The Notes of the Fatherland* (the most popular journal in the 1870s) had approximates 8,100 subscribers (not including retail). Ibid. Also, see Joseph Frank, introduction to *The Diary of a Writer,* trans. Boris Brasol (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Peregrine Smith, 1979), ix. This is also a good source of general background information on The *Diary.*

in order to ask for advice. Dostoevsky, in turn, incorporated his correspondents' letters into the pages of his *Diary,* at times even excerpting and engaging in direct dialog with them.[114]

Why then, despite the *Diary's* enormous popularity during the time of its publication, did it receive less attention from later critics than Dostoevsky's other works? The answer lies primarily in the heterogeneity of the work's themes, its indeterminate genre, and, for later critics, the discomfort associated with Dostoevsky's doctrinaire ideologies — from his shocking anti-Semitism to the millenarian, apocalyptic "prophecies" that predicted the rise of a Russian "utopia" amongst the ruins of a soon-to-disintegrate Europe. Although those latter parts of the *Diary* seem most shocking to the modern reader, one must realize that these ideas found strong resonance among Dostoevsky's contemporaneous readers and, overall, were connected to already existing, strongly-held beliefs in Russian society.

Dostoevsky's engagement with the *Diary,* as a germinating future project and an actual publication, spans the period from 1865 to his death in 1881. The earliest reference to the future journal occurs in the author's 1865 letter to Baron A.E. Wrangel. In it, Dostoevsky shares, "I have in mind a certain periodical publication, though not a journal. Both useful and profitable. It could come into existence in a year."[115] In the next five years, he makes multiple references to his plans for the future *Diary,* referring to his desires to publish "a weekly journal of [his] own type, which [he] invented"; as well as, later, an "enormous useful annual […] to be issued

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[114] For Dostoevsky's innovative experimentation with incorporating his correspondents' responses to his work, see Volgin, *Dostoevsky-Zhurnalist,* 41–54 and his "Pis'ma chitatelei k F.M. Dostoevskomu," *Voprosy literatury* 9 (1971), 193–94.

[115] F.M. Dostoevsky, *Pis'ma*, ed. A.S. Dolinin (Moscow: Goslitizdat, 1959), I: 424. All references to Dostoevsky's letters henceforth will be to this edition and will be designated by "*Pis'ma,"* followed by volume number (i.e. *Pis'ma I,* 424).

without fail in a large number of copies and to appear without fail every year in January, […] editorial [in nature, but] with an idea, with great study."[116]

The prototype of the *Diary* finally comes into existence in 1873, in the form of a sporadic column in *The Citizen* (*Grazhdanin*), a conservative journal Dostoevsky edited in 1873 and part of 1874. By 1876, the author finally realized his long-held plans for an independent, one-man journal. As Dostoevsky tells us in the first monthly issue, the journal was indeed meant to serve as "a diary in a literal sense, a record of everything that has been seen, heard, or read [by the author]."[117] Furthermore, it is to provide a chronicle of the current spiritual development of Russia, as well as of the major concerns of the day. And the work arguably delivers on these ambitious goals, exploring topics as diverse as literary theory and criticism, foreign and military policy, effectiveness of Russia's legal reforms, and metaphysics, among others. The part of the work that was first translated and that initially received almost exclusive critical attention in the west, is Dostoevsky's literary fiction in the journal, which consisted of the short stories "Bobok" (1873), "The Boy at Christ's Christmas Party" (1876), "The Peasant Marei" (1876), the novella *The Meek One* (1876), as well as "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man" (1877).[118] Altogether, the *Diary* as an independent publication appeared twenty-one times in 1876 and 1877, at which point it was interrupted due to Dostoevsky's work on *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880). The journal

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[116] *Pis'ma II,* 161–62.

[117] F.M. Dostoevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tridtsati tomakh* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1972–90), 22: 136. Henceforward, all citations in reference to this volume will be given with *"Pss,"* followed by volume and page numbers (i.e.: *Pss,* 22: 136).

[118] Gary Saul Morson stresses the interconnectedness of the text, pointing out Dostoevsky's insistence on both heterogeneity of form and yet a simultaneous stress on an underlying unity of each issue. Thus, according to him, works of fiction within *The Diary* should be read within the context of the whole text. *The Boundaries of Genre: Dostoevsky's Diary of a Writer and the Traditions of Literary Utopia* (Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Press), 30–33.

came out as a single issue in 1880 and was meant to resume regular monthly publication in 1881, with only a single (January) issue coming out due to Dostoevsky's death.[119]

The Cases

The cases I focus on in the *Diary* are those of Anastasia Kairova and Ekaterina Kornilova, with the author's views on free will and personal responsibility in the two proceedings often seen as self-contradictory. Kairova was a thirty-year-old actress who was on trial for the attempted murder of the wife of her lover, Vasilii Velikanov, a retired naval officer and owner of the acting troupe Kairova belonged to.[120] On the evening of July 7th, 1875, Kairova found Velikanov in bed with his allegedly estranged wife at the dacha rented with Kairova's money. The defendant attacked Mrs. Velikanova with a razor she had purchased previously, inflicting deep cuts on Mrs. Velikanova's neck, chest, and head, before being restrained. Miraculously, Mrs. Velikanova's wounds proved non-fatal and she was able to return to work some days later.[121]

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[119] Ibid, 4.

[120] For biographical information on Kairova, see Mary F. Zirin, "Meeting the Challenge: Russian Women Reporters and the Balkan Crisis of the Late 1870s," in *An Improper Profession: Women, Gender, and Journalism in Late Imperial Russia,* ed. Barbara T. Norton and Jehanne M. Gheith (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2001), 140–66.

[121] Harriet Murav gives a summary of newspaper accounts about the case, which appeared in *Golos* in *Russia's Legal Fictions* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 145–46. Ol'ga Makarova cites the more scandalous details (Mrs. Velikanova's alleged sexual frigidity, Velikanov's weak-willed character, the problems of the Velikanov marriage, as well as Kairova's controlling personality, among others) that were included in periodicals like *Novoe vremia, Peterburgskaia gazeta,* and *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti* in "'Sud'ba kakim-to rokovym obrazom stavit menia poperek Vashei dorogi…': Delo Kairovoi i ego sled v biografii A.S. Suvorina, *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* 75 (2005) ("Prilozhenie: *Dnevnik Nastas'i Vasil'evny Kairovoi v sumasshedshem dome"*), 110–21. Excerpts of Kairova's manuscripts have

Dostoevsky's commentary on the Kairova case first appears in the *Diary* in the May 1876 issue. In this and subsequent pieces, the author condemns Kairova's crime, but admits his compassion for the "wretched, heinous criminal, who is completely guilty" and even expresses his relief at her release, all the while deeply regretting the fact that it could not be secured without actual acquittal (*opravdanie*). Dostoevsky strongly condemns the fact that Kairova fails to acknowledge her own guilt and responsibility for the attack. So unstable and morally confused is Kairova, Dostoevsky argues, that she persists in believing that she, instead of Velikanov's wife, is the actual victim in the whole matter.

Dostoevsky's commentary largely focuses on this moral confusion on the part of Kairova, on her inability to control her carnal passions and possessiveness, as well as on her defense attorney's, Evgenii Utin's, misleading oratory tactics. The author does not blame the jury for their verdict of "not guilty," however, arguing instead that they made the only choice they could in good conscience. Dostoevsky insists that the jurors were limited by the restrictions of the questions they were asked to answer, most problematic among them being the question of whether Kairova was guilty of premeditated murder.[122] The determination of intent in this case, Dostoevsky insists, cannot be definitively decided. It is this very question of intent, which is

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been published by O.A. Babuk as "Avtobiograficheskii ocherk A.V. Kairovoi," *Rossiiskii arkhiv* 11 (2001), 375–87.

[122] The summary of all four questions asked of the jury is as follows: (1) Did Kairova inflict wounds with a razor on Velikanova with the premeditated intention of killing her, but was stopped by Velikanova and her husband? (2) Did she inflict these wounds, for the same purpose, in a fit of anger (*v zapal'chivosti i razdrazhenii*)? (3) Did Kairova act in a fit of madness (*umoistuplenie*) that was precisely established? (4) If she acted not under the influence of madness, then is she guilty of the crime in the first or second questions? The jurors answered the first two questions in the negative and did not respond the third and fourth questions.

inseparably tied to the nature of unconscious psychic drives and one's ability to control her response to them, that I will turn to shortly.

Given Dostoevsky's strong criticism of Kairova's acquittal, as well as his anger towards Utin's romanticization of his client's passion towards her lover as something noble, understandable, and worthy of not being called a crime, the author's stance towards the Ekaterina Kornilova case comes as a complete surprise. In early 1876, Kornilova, the twenty-year-old peasant-born wife of a widower who had a child from a previous marriage, threw her six-year-old stepdaughter out of a fourth-story window. Miraculously, the child survived and suffered no serious bodily harm. Kornilova immediately turned herself in and confessed that she planned to harm the child in retaliation for her own mistreatment at the hands of her husband. Kornilov supposedly criticized her harshly, compared her negatively with his deceased wife, and even forbade her to associate with her own family. Kornilova was convicted in the court of law and sentenced to two years and eight months of hard labor, as well as to permanent exile after the end of her prison term.[123]

The cases of Kairova and Kornilova seem to stand in direct opposition to each other in terms of Dostoevsky's position towards the defendant's culpability and her verdict. In the Kairova case, as in the discussions of the Kronenberg case earlier and in the essay "Environment" (1873), among other pieces, Dostoevsky expresses his growing disappointment with the recently instituted trial by jury system and decries the Russian jurors' frequent tendency to acquit defendants, despite the often overwhelming facts proving their guilt. Furthermore, in all these instances, as well as in *The Brothers Karamazov* later, Dostoevsky criticizes harshly the

[123] *Pss,* 23: 138.

then popular "environmental" theory, or the argument that crime and deviant behavior in general resulted solely from the effects of unfavorable social circumstances on individuals.

Whereas in most instances Dostoevsky also consistently mocks the popularly used temporary insanity (*vremennyi affekt*) defense, demonstrating cautious and healthy skepticism towards the defense's employment of medical experts, he now appears to privilege the medical expert testimony in the Kornilova case.[124] Although in the Kronenberg and the Kairova cases Dostoevsky emphasizes the need to acknowledge the guilt of the defendants, despite simultaneously agreeing with the jurors' willingness to show them mercy, in the Kornilova case, he suddenly reverses his position and uses the temporary insanity defense to exculpate the defendant, citing the fact that she was pregnant at the time of the commission of her crime as a possible explanation for her behavior. In addition, Dostoevsky becomes personally involved in the case, more than once meeting with Kornilova and leading a public campaign through the *Diary* for her re-trial. He in fact succeeds, with the second trial resulting in Kornilova's acquittal.

Critics have taken various approaches to explaining this seeming reversal of previously held views by Dostoevsky. Harriet Murav, for example, argues that these apparent contradictions in fact contain an underlying consistency, which she locates in Dostoevsky's creation of his public persona as the author of the *Diary.* Murav argues that in authoring the *Diary,* Dostoevsky "authors himself as a child of, and as a father to a new Russia."[125] According to her, Dostoevsky puts himself in the position of the (abused) child in the earlier Kronenberg case and in the

[124] For example, in his notes for the Kairova case, Dostoevsky writes, "Affect! I beg your pardon, one can say that all impressions, every impression is an affect! Sunrise is an affect, a glance at the moon is an affect, and what an affect at that!" *Pss,* 24: 207.

[125] Murav, *Russia's Legal Fictions,* 127.

position of the parent in the Kornilova case; in the former he resists the authority of the lawyer and the father, but, in the latter, now as a "symbolic father" himself, he accepts that authority.[126]

Gary Rosenshield, in turn, also argues for important symbolic resonance of the Kornilova case as an explanation for Dostoevsky's seeming reversal of views. According to Rosenshield, the manner in which Kornilova's second trial is conducted bears almost more importance for Dostoevsky than the verdict itself. The trial in fact creates the possibility of class reconciliation, and consequently nothing less than the salvation, of Russian society as a whole. As with Zosima's assertions in *The Brothers Karamazov* that everyone is responsible for one another, Rosenshield argues that for Dostoevsky salvation and redemption can only come about in the context of a community, through a unified collective will. Thus Dostoevsky turns the trial into a utopian site of numerous reconciliations: between Kornilova and her husband, Kornilova and her stepdaughter, the jurors who quickly agree to acquit, between the lawyers, the court and the public, the medical experts and — ultimately — between the classes of Russian society, who unite in their demonstration of faith in human redemption and in extending compassion, mercy, and forgiveness towards the defendant.[127]

Finally, Anna Schur also argues that Dostoevsky's seeming reversal of views with the Kornilova case does not present an aberration. Schur points out that Dostoevsky's defense of Kornilova can be seen as an extension of the same impulse that led him to be admittedly happy when obviously guilty defendants (like Kairova and the earlier-mentioned Zasulich, for example) were acquitted. According to Schur, Dostoevsky's criticisms in large part stem from the absence

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[126] Ibid.

[127] Gary Rosenshield, *Western Law, Russian Justice: Dostoevsky, The Jury Trial, and the Law* (Madison, Wisc.: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 68–104.

of legal categories that would acknowledge the defendant's guilt, but would still allow for forgiveness. The absence of such categories, according to Dostoevsky, often results in denial of the very existence of the crime the defendants are being tried for, since the jurors wish to forgive, but are legally unable to without denying the guilt itself. Schur argues that what remains unchanged in Dostoevsky's approach to the legal cases, including the seemingly aberrant Kornilova affair, is his interest in moral betterment, in "redemption and spiritual regeneration" of the defendants.[128] Whereas in some cases, Schur points out, moral regeneration is possible through insistence on punishment, in others it is possible only by foregoing it and "letting the defendant go" in order to allow her to pursue the path to redemption.[129]

All three of the scholars point out important sources of consistency in Dostoevsky's engagement with the court cases, but an additional important dimension of underlying continuity in his views is largely overlooked: personal responsibility and potential for regeneration specifically in light of the scientific views on the unconscious and one's will. Both Murav and Schur do investigate in the course of their analyses the role mental sciences play during the trials. Murav, for example, argues that Kairova's characterization by her defense attorney resonates strongly with late nineteenth-century scientific theories about the female criminal. Furthermore,

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[128] Schur, *Wages of Evil,* 67. For additional readings of the Kairova case, also see the various pieces by Gary Saul Morson: "Introductory Study: Dostoevsky's Great Experiment" in Fedor Dostoevskii, *A Writer's Diary,* trans. Kenneth Lantz (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1993), 1–120 (henceforward, translations from this edition will be designated by "*WD"* and page number), esp. "Sideshadowing in the *Diary*: Kairova Time," 90–93; *Narrative and Freedom: The Shadows of Time* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 142–45; "Contingency and Freedom, Prosaics and Process," *New Literary History* 29:4 (1998), 673–86; and "Paradoxical Dostoevsky," *Slavic and East European Journal* 43:3 (1999), 471–94. On the Kornilova case, see Eric Naiman, "Of Crime, Utopia, and Repressive Complements: The Further Adventures of the Ridiculous Man," *Slavic Review* 50:3 (1991), 512–20.

[129] Schur, *Wages of Evil,* 67.

in her discussion of the Kornilova case, she argues that "becoming a father to Russia requires that Dostoevsky discipline unruly female sexuality."[130] Schur, in turn, looks at views on consciousness in criminal psychology, mostly restricting her analysis to the perspectives of doctor A.I. Freze, the criminologist Nekliudov, and the prominent journalist V. Zaitsev.

Whereas these two analyses focus primarily on the dominant, overwhelmingly materialist paradigm, especially prevalent in criminal psychology, however, I am interested in theories that begin problematizing the materialist/spiritualist divide, and which are introduced in Russia chiefly through the work of G.H. Lewes, who popularized scholars like Alexander Bain and William Benjamin Carpenter. Lewes's *Physiology of Common Life* was written for the general audience and was a *tour-de-force* introduction into most areas of physiology — from its relevance to issues surrounding proper digestion and blood circulation, to the relationship between the brain and the mind — with a specific emphasis on the British tradition. In addition to providing an excellent, detailed, and yet accessible primer on physiology and most current debates stemming from it, the book also introduced prominent British psychologists like Alexander Bain and William Benjamin Carpenter to the Russian audience, before their individual monographs were translated into Russian. *Physiology of Common Life'*s popularity in Russia is attested to not only by its translation into Russian in 1861, only two years after its

[130] Murav, *Russia's Legal Fictions,* 142. For importance of gender and sexuality for the cases, see the same piece. Also, for other readings of women and sexuality in the *Diary* and in Dostoevsky's oeuvre as a whole*,* see Ronald D. LeBlanc, "Dostoevsky and the Trial of Nastasia Kairova: Carnal Love, Crimes of Passion, and Spiritual Redemption," *Russian Review* 71 (2012), 630–54; Nina Pelikan Straus, *Dostoevsky and the Woman Question: Rereadings at the End of the Century* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994); and Susan Fusso, *Discovering Sexuality in Dostoevsky* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2006). Although gender is an important component of the cases, it is not the central focus of my own analysis. I am primarily interested in the more general scientific scholarship on consciousness and volition.

original publication in English, but also by the fact that it went through two additional editions in Russian in the next three years.[131]

As I discussed in Chapter One, the materialist/spiritualist divide represented the major source of tensions when it came to shifts in scientific perspectives on the human psyche in the nineteenth century. The materialists (who dominated the sciences) embraced biological determinism and reduced human consciousness to the product of one's biology, thus eliminating free will and choice, whereas the spiritualists argued that the body (including the nervous system and the brain) was but a vehicle for the manifestation and the expression of the soul, with emphasis on personal responsibility and free will. Popular discussions of nineteenth-century views on the unconscious often situated it squarely in either one camp or the other, and the Kairova and Kornilova cases were no exception. As I will demonstrate, however, situating the unconscious exclusively in the materialist or the spiritualist school of thought, does not reflect the reality of the nuanced theories of the unconscious and human intentionality during the time. Bain and Carpenter challenged this binary opposition, and views of the unconscious were at the center of the debates in their work. Carpenter in particular eventually became well known for arguing that the strict separation between the mind and body was reductive, as was the insistence that only the body affected the mind. Instead, he argued that the mind, or consciousness, could also intentionally affect and ultimately change the body, although this process was much more arduous and difficult than the automatic effects of the body on the mind.

In this chapter then, I argue that another source of underlying consistency in Dostoevsky's views on personal responsibility in the Kairova and Kornilova cases is his reliance

[131] The second edition came out in 1862 and the third in 1863.

on a more nuanced understanding of the unconscious and intentionality, similar to that of Bain and Carpenter. This view both embraces the less reductive theories of the time and rejects their predominant counterparts that insist on strictly materialist views of consciousness. Furthermore, Dostoevsky's insistence on punishment in one case, but not in the other, is rooted in large part in the defendant's reaction to her crime, which in turn is connected with the possibility of future positive effects of the changed, regenerated mind on the body.

On "Uterine Lust" and Irresistible Impulses: Biologized Intent in the Cases

While Utin, Kairova's defense attorney, argues for his client's exculpation using a combination of outdated Romantic tropes and forensic (criminal) psychology, Dostoevsky criticizes Defense's valorization of her actions that ultimately leads to the denial of the crime as such. Denying the reductive assumptions underlying biological determinism, Dostoevsky's views do not in fact reject the relevance of biology for Kairova's actions. It is impossible to determine whether Kairova acted with premeditation of murder, Dostoevsky argues, because, had she not been subdued, she could have acted in any number of ways, given the same circumstances. Her actions are therefore not predetermined by biology or environment. At the same time, however, Kairova's actions are a result of her previous lifestyle, intentions, and choices. In general, there are possibilities, Dostoevsky argues, for future redemption and change for Kairova, but this chance to rise above her moral confusion and carnal desires cannot come about if defense and the public as a whole refuse to call her crime a crime.

Defending his client, Utin simultaneously portrays Kairova as a passionate, selfless heroine who succumbed to the purity and intensity of her love for Velikanov on the one hand, and as a victim of her social environment, female biology, and heredity on the other. In the

process, according to Dostoevsky, he conflates two types of instincts, or unconscious drives: the selfless, protective, maternal instincts that are oriented primarily towards the well-being of another (her lover/child) on the one hand, and the selfish, possessive, carnal desires that are concerned mainly with its own satisfaction and self-gain on the other. Utin, for example, compares Kairova to a "lioness protecting her cub," when he speaks of the woman's feelings towards Velikanov and towards the threat she perceives from her lover's wife.[132] He also informs the jury that the defendant "considered him hers," "her creation," and "a darling child… whom she wanted to elevate and ennoble."[133] Dostoevsky, of course, does not hesitate to point out that this "lion cub" and "darling child" is "tall, of solid 'grenadier's' build, with curly hairs on the back of his neck."[134] Furthermore, Dostoevsky dismisses the affair as a "petty intrigue" (*intrizhka*).[135]

The author's stance implies two things about unconscious motivations in this case: not all unconscious drives are negative (as instincts for self-sacrifice demonstrate), and yet Kairova's unconscious motivations definitely do not belong to the latter, elevating category and must be correctly labeled. This insistence on correctly labeling the nature of Kairova's unconscious drives appears to bring into conflict psychological discourses from two periods: the time before and after the height of the spiritualist/materialist debates in Russia. Dostoevsky's privileging of the psyche over the body, for example, as well as his acknowledgement of the positive, elevating unconscious drives, as opposed to their atavistic, primitive counterparts in late nineteenth-

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[132] *Pss,* 23:18.

[133] Ibid, 13–14.

[134] Ibid.

[135] Ibid.

century sciences, shares roots with the Romantic psychology of C.G. Carus, whose work made a deep impression on Dostoevsky in the 1840s.[136] In Carus's views, all illness and, by extension, pathological behavior is an expression of an underlying spiritual, psychic imbalance or distortion, located in his version of the unconscious. In classic spiritualist fashion, Carus privileges the soul's primacy over the body and envisions a much more benign unconscious than his later nineteenth-century colleagues. For him, although nervous and other physical illnesses become expressed through the body, one always has access to healing through acknowledging and removing imbalances in one's unconscious.[137] This view, of course, is reversed in the materialist claims that consciousness (as well as the unconscious) is solely the product of the nervous system and the brain, with pathological mental states resulting from physical abnormality and thus requiring a physiologically oriented approach to treatment. As I will show later in the chapter, however, Dostoevsky's views not only share important similarities with Carus's theories, but are also in line with later nineteenth-century views that go against the strict materialist/spiritualist divide when it comes to the psyche.

As Murav points out, Utin portrays his client both as the (by 1876 outdated) literary Romantic hero who becomes transfigured in her outburst of passion, merging with nature and losing all traces of self-consciousness in the process and, at the same time, as the "embodiment

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[136] Specifically on C.G. Carus and Dostoevsky's fiction, see: Samuel Smith and Andrei Isotoff, *The Abnormal from Within: Dostoevsky* (Eugene, Oreg.: University of Oregon, 1935). This piece also draws a connection between Carus's and Freud's work. Also, see George Gibian, "C. G. Carus' Psyche and Dostoevsky," *American Slavic and East European Review* 14.3 (1955), 371–82.

[137] Carl Gustav Carus, *Psyche. Zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der Seele* (Pforzheim: Flammer und Hoffmann, 1846), 1–12. The volume was translated into Russian as Karl Gustav Karus, *Sravnitel'naia psikhologiia ili istoriia razvitiia dushi na razlichnykh stupeniakh zhivotnogo mira* (Moscow: K. Shamov, 1867).

of new scientific theories about the psychology and physiology of the female criminal in late nineteenth-century Russia."[138] Describing the moment Kairova discovered Velikanov with his wife, Utin is reported as saying:

> Passion overwhelmed her. […] Jealousy consumed, destroyed her reason and forced her to play a terrible game. […] Jealousy made her mind crumble [*iskroshila*], nothing was left of it. How could she control herself? […] Really, gentlemen of the jury, is it possible for a woman to remain calm? She would have to be a stone… The man she passionately loves is in her bedroom, in her bed, with another woman! Her feelings were a stormy torrent that destroys everything it encounters in its path; she raged and destroyed. If we ask this torrent what it is doing, why it does evil, could it answer us? No, it is silent.[139]

As the dominant discourses in criminal psychology of the time would have it, Kairova, as a woman, is presented as constitutionally incapable of premeditation when it comes to her crime, with her deviant behavior coming about simply as a result of being overwhelmed by strong emotions and as an automatic reaction due to inability to exercise restraint.[140] Utin thus attempts to convince the jurors (and the courtroom audience) that Kairova is in fact not guilty of a crime

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[138] Murav, *Russia's Legal Fictions,* 148–49.

[139] *Pss,* 23: 14–15. "Страсть обуревала ее. […] [Р]евность уничтожила, поглотила ее ум и заставила играть страшную игру. […] [Р]евность искрошила ее рассудок, от него ничего не осталось. Как же могла она управлять собою. […]Это было свыше ее сил. Ее чувства били бурным потоком, который истребляет всё, что ему попадется на пути; она рвала и метала; она могла истребить все окружающее (!!!). Если мы спросим этот поток, что он делает, зачем причиняет зло, то разве он может нам ответить. Нет, он безмолвствует."

[140] Murav, *Russia's Legal Fictions,* 149. As Murav notes, for example, the law professor I.Ia. Foinitskii argues that women are inherently incapable of premeditation when it comes to crime (cited in Murav).

at all, since, implicitly, she had no free will to rely on in the matter. The inclusion of the testimony of Kairova's mother further underscores the fact that she is a product of her biology, with degenerative history of her family resulting in her greater physiological irritability and sensitivity.[141] Thus, when presented with an overwhelming stimulus in the form of her loved one in the arms of a rival, Utin's argument suggests, the "givens" of Kairova's biology lead to a "natural" reaction, with the woman herself bearing no responsibility for her subsequent actions. In this portrayal, as the "silent torrent," she is beyond the reach of language or reason: she is body, nature, pure force. She is the outdated Romantic hero who has been reinterpreted in neurological terms.

While both the defense and criminal psychology emphasize the lack of premeditation in the case, Dostoevsky focuses on the impossibility of determining that sustained intent instead. Denying both biological and environmental determinism, Dostoevsky reintroduces the possibility of personal choice into the case and complicates his readers' conceptualization of the unconscious. Discussing Kairova's state of mind, the author insists that he does not think that the defendant "was in an unconscious state [*v bessoznatel'nom sostoianii*]" at the time of the attack, further adding:

> I don't even allow for the possibility of the slightest madness. On the contrary, I think that, in that minute, when she was cutting, she knew that she was cutting, but whether or not she wanted to kill her rival, having consciously set that goal —

[141] Ibid, 147.

> that she might not have known in the highest degree […] She might have been cutting, in anger and hatred, without thinking about the consequences.[142]

In his discussions of the Kairova case Dostoevsky appears to use the term "unconscious" (*bessoznatel'nyi*) in its more narrow, legal sense, as something done in an alternate state of consciousness, which would not be remembered later.[143] As we will see, however, Dostoevsky problematizes the narrowness of this term in his pieces on the Kornilova case, reaching for definitions of the unconscious beyond the legal sphere. For the purposes of my discussion here, I will rely on the broader definition of the unconscious that includes actions that are taken automatically, or without conscious intent instead. Ultimately, this is the dominant definition in

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[142] *Pss,* 23: 9. "Заметьте, этим я вовсе не говорю, что она была в бессознательном состоянии; я даже ни малейшего помешательства не допускаю. Напротив, наверно, в ту минуту, когда резала, знала, что режет, но хочет ли, сознательно поставив себе это целью, лишить свою соперницу жизни — этого она могла в высшей степени не знать […] [О]на могла резать, в гневе и ненависти, не думая вовсе о последствиях."

[143] I discuss the breadth of the various uses of the term "unconscious" in chapter one. Lewes decries the breadth of the definitions of consciousness, stating "But what is consciousness? Unhappily there are scarcely two people who precisely agree in their use of this term. Some use it as the synonym for the soul; others as a distinct faculty. It is sometimes employed to designate sensation, and at others only those sensations that usurp our attention," in *Physiology of Common Life, II:* 48–49. For similar sentiments, also see A.I. Freze's commentary on the lack of clarity in scientific definitions of consciousness and unconsciousness. Freze was a medical doctor and the director of the Kazan Hospital for the Insane. He comments: "The majority of psychological terms […] which are used to indicate the so-called psychic faculties are very vague. […] The word 'consciousness' denotes a most elastic notion. Sometimes it means a specific mental state or even a fleeting psychic act; other times it means general capacity to relate to one's surroundings or to oneself in a certain way, etc." *Ocherk sudebnoi psikhologii* (Kazan': K.A. Tilli, 1874), 143–44. For a discussion of Freze's work and its relevance to Dostoevsky's views on the Kornilova case, see Schur, *Wages of Evil,* 68–79. Schur focuses primarily on the views predominant in criminal (physiological) psychology (in addition to Freze, for example, she also looks at the work of the criminologist Nekliudov and the prominent journalist V. Zaitsev, who held strong materialist views). By contrast, I explore the views outside criminology/criminal psychology (which are overwhelmingly materialist) and in contemporaneous psychological theories that trouble the materialist/spiritualist divide.

the sciences of the mind outside criminal psychology at this time and one Dostoevsky himself leans towards in his discussions of Kornilova's state of mind later.

Denying the possibility of determining the defendant's sustained intent in relation to her crime, Dostoevsky takes his reader on a tour of her possible actions had she not been subdued in mid-attack. He asks:

> And what if, after having slashed Velikanova once across the throat with the razor, she had given out a scream, had started to tremble and had run off? How can you know that this might not have happened? […] And what if it had so happened that, after having slashed Velikanova once across the throat with the razor and after having taken fright, she had started to slit her own throat instead? Yes, might she not perhaps have started here to slit her own throat? And, finally, what if she not only had not taken fright, but, on the contrary, having felt the first splashes of hot blood, she had flown into a frenzy and not only had finished slicing up Velikanova, but had also begun to mutilate her body, cutting off her head "completely," then cutting off her nose and lips, and only later, after this severed head had already been taken away from her, she had suddenly asked: "What is it that I have done?" *I am asking you this because all of these things could well have happened, all of these things could well have come out of one and the same woman, one and the same soul*.[144]

[144] *Pss,* 23:10. My emphasis. "А что если она, полоснув раз бритвой по горлу Великановой, закричала бы, задрожала бы и бросилась бы вон бежать? Почему вы знаете, что этого не случилось бы? […] А что если бы так случилось, что она, полоснув раз и испугавшись, принялась бы сама себя резать, да, может быть, тут бы себя и зарезала? А что, наконец,

The author's recreation of Kairova's possible reactions to the realization of her own offense presents three versions of the same structural scenario: Kairova acts on impulse, without the intentional decision to attack her rival; sometime during the act, she experiences the first moment of self-awareness and she now has a choice in terms of various ways of reacting to it. In the first instance, the moment of awareness is followed by "fright" at the conscious recognition of her actions and then by avoidance and escape in the form of physical fleeing. In the second scenario, the moment of self-consciousness is once again accompanied by horror and by subsequent desire to escape, this time through attempted suicide. The previous failure to recognize another's humanity is now accompanied by what can be seen as a warped attempt at empathy, or "co-feeling," as imaginary Kairova inflicts the same wounds on herself that she a second ago "mindlessly" inflicted on her dehumanized rival. The action also appears as a physical self-punishment, a disavowal and rejection of the "unconscious," physiological drives that led to her violent outburst. Finally, in the last, most sensational and violent scenario, after the encounter with hot blood Kairova goes into a form of a violent trance and loses any semblance of humanity, as she cuts Velikanova to pieces. Only after the severed head of her rival is taken away from her, does Kairova experience a moment of conscious awareness and possibility for reflection.

Dostoevsky's imaginative recreation of Kairova's possible reactions to her violent outburst emphasizes three main things for his readers: First, that Kairova's actions are

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если бы она не только не испугалась, а, напротив, почувствовав. первые брызги горячей крови, вскочила бы в бешенстве и не только бы докончила резать Великанову, но еще начала бы ругаться над трупом, отрезала бы голову "напрочь", отрезала бы нос, губы, и только потом, вдруг, когда у нее уже отняли бы эту голову, догадалась бы: что это она такое сделала? Я потому так спрашиваю, что всё это могло случиться и выйти от одной и той же женщины, из одной и той же души, при одном и том же настроении и при одной и той же обстановке."

"automatic," or void of volition, up to a certain point; only after she gains self-awareness of her actions does she have an opportunity to make a choice as to how to react further. Second, Dostoevsky points out that, once the imaginary Kairova has an opportunity to choose, that choice can take a number of forms, ranging from avoidance (fleeing from the scene) and harsh, violent self-punishment (cutting her own throat) to a yet another response that Dostoevsky does not describe altogether (following her question of "What have I done?"). In the first two scenarios, Kairova's "moral humanity" becomes activated shortly after her initial attack; in the third scenario, she embodies the most extreme scientific assumptions about the atavistic, "primitive," animalistic unconscious drives that supposedly lurk within. Even in this case, however, Dostoevsky denies biological determinism, as he points out that Kairova still eventually experiences a moment of self-consciousness and eventual choice. In addition, whereas the materialist, biologically deterministic sciences would eliminate the very concept of the soul, insisting that consciousness arises from the nervous system and the brain, Dostoevsky here emphasizes the fact that the many possible courses of action that would have been available to Kairova once she is self-aware would have arisen precisely *from* the soul.

Dostoevsky's description makes it clear that the imaginary Kairova's actions originally lack self-awareness and volition *and* that she eventually has access to choice and, implicitly, possibility for future change. If Kairova's actions are not completely predetermined by her biology or social environment, however, then what drives the violence of her initial "automatic" outburst? And what role might the exercise of her will after the moment of self-awareness play in similar future states lacking awareness? To get at the answers, I turn to the Kornilova case, particularly to the way Dostoevsky continues to problematize the meaning of the term "unconscious."

The insistence on the inadequacy of the narrow legal definition of the unconscious lies at the heart of Dostoevsky's arguments in Kornilova's defense. In response to Dr. Nikitin's assertion that the defendant committed her crime "consciously" [*soznatel'no*], "but not without the possibility of irritation and affect,"[145] Dostoevsky responds:

> The most important element of the prosecution's case [against Kornilova], of course, is that she committed the crime *consciously.* But once more I ask: what role does consciousness play in a case like this? She might well have been fully conscious, but could she have resisted the wild and perverted fit of temporary insanity even with the clearest consciousness in the world? Does this really seem so impossible? Had she not been pregnant, at the moment of her outburst of anger she might have thought: "That wretched little brat ought to be thrown out of the window; at least that would stop him [the husband] from nagging me about her mother all the time" She might have thought it, but she would not have done it. But in her pregnant condition *she could not resist* and she did it.[146]

As Dostoevsky argues in the passage, it is not simply enough to retain sensation during one's actions and to be able to recollect them later for something to be considered a fully conscious act. The passage differentiates between impulse (unconscious drive) and one's ability to resist it

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[145] *Pss,* 23: 138.

[146] *WD*, 727. Original emphasis. "Но, во-первых, что может означать тут слово: сознательно? Бессознательно редко что-нибудь делается людьми, разве в лунатизме, в бреду, в белой горячке. Разве не знает даже хоть и медицина, что можно совершить нечто и совершенно сознательно, а между тем невменяемо. […]Произошло бы, например, вот что: оставшись одна с падчерицей, прибитая мужем, в злобе на него, она бы подумала в горьком раздражении, про себя: 'Вот бы вышвырнуть эту девчонку, ему назло, за окошко', - подумала бы, да и не сделала. Согрешила бы мысленно, а не делом. А теперь, в беременном состоянии, взяла да и сделала."

through the assertion of one's will. Following a somewhat similar argumentative move to the one used by Utin in Kairova's defense, the author argues that although Kornilova is in part responsible for her initial ill intent towards her step-daughter, she cannot be held responsible for her actual actions in carrying it out. Like Utin before him then, Dostoevsky, at first glance appears to eliminate the defendant's free choice in the matter, arguing that her biology dictated her actions.

In addition, whereas in his discussion of the Kairova case, Dostoevsky places emphasis on the fact that the defendant's actions arise from her soul, in the Kornilova case, as the passage demonstrates, he emphasizes the fact that the body influences the spirit. Dostoevsky tells his readers, for example, "Everyone knows that during pregnancy (especially with her first child), a woman quite often becomes affected by certain strange influences and impressions, *to which her spirit [dukh] strangely and fantastically submits*. These influences sometimes take on — although this happens in rare cases — extraordinary, abnormal, almost ridiculous forms."[147] It happens rarely, Dostoevsky asserts, but the circumstances of (in this case female) biology do in certain cases eliminate the possibility of a conscious choice and an exercise of will on her part, with the mechanism by which this happens remaining mysterious and unknown.

In his discussion of the Kornilova case, Dostoevsky also insists that the physiologically based effects of pregnancy and its at times criminal results transcend class differences, pointing out that medical science does not necessarily understand fully these "strange and fantastic"

[147] *Pss,* 23: 138. My emphasis. "Всем известно, что женщина во время беременности (да еще первым ребенком) бывает весьма часто даже подвержена иным странным влияниям и впечатлениям, которым странно и фантастично подчиняется ее дух. Эти влияния принимают иногда, — хотя, впрочем, в редких случаях, — чрезвычайные, ненормальные, почти нелепые формы. Но что в том, что это редко случается (то есть слишком уж чрезвычайные-то явления)"

influences. The author shares the story of his female acquaintance, for example, "a lady by far not poor, educated, and of good social standing," who compulsively steals from family members and acquaintances while pregnant, despite the fact that she is not in financial need.[148] Dostoevsky shares with the reader:

> Her consciousness was fully retained, but it was the impulse [*vlechenie*] that she couldn't resist. It seems that even now it is doubtful that medical science can say something definite about such occurrences, or rather about the spiritual [*dukhovnoi*] side of these occurrences: due to what precise laws do such ruptures [*perelomy*], such submission [*podchinenie*] and influence, such madness without madness occur, and what role exactly can consciousness play here and what does it [consciousness] mean in this case?[149]

Once again, Dostoevsky points out that to have mental sensations is not the same as having access to one's will. Dostoevsky's anecdote emphasizes two additional things: the fact that Kornilova's actions do not result from a deeply rooted degenerative criminal tendency, as many criminal psychologists of the time would have it, especially given her peasant origin. In addition, Dostoevsky disavows environmental influences in this example: it is beyond doubt, for example, that his female acquaintance steals not out of financial (i.e. environmentally imposed) need, but due to some other "strange, fantastical" reason. Similarly, Dostoevsky's initial (mocking)

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[148] *Pss,* 23: 138–39.

[149] Ibid, 139. "Сознание сохранялось вполне, но лишь перед влечением она не могла устоять. Надо полагать, что медицинская наука вряд ли может сказать и до сих пор, в подобных явлениях, что-нибудь в точности, то есть насчет духовной стороны этих явлений: по каким именно законам происходят в душе человеческой такие переломы, такие подчинения и влияния, такие сумасшествия без сумасшествия, и что собственно тут может значить и какую играет роль сознание?"

dismissal of the predominance of environmental factors in Kornilova's motivations when he first mentions the case during his discussion of the Kairova affair stands here.[150] In other words, Kornilova did not commit her crime because of the unfortunate circumstances of her marriage, the hard daily labor she is subjected to, her difficult upbringing, or other purely social, environmental circumstances. The latter would have wide generalizable applications to the rest of the population; by contrast, Dostoevsky argues that Kornilova's (and his acquaintance's) submission to the "strange and fantastical influences" is rare and exceptional.

Thus, Dostoevsky challenges both the strictly materialist and the strictly spiritualist views on the unconscious and personal responsibility. With his rejection of Utin's usage of forensic (criminal) psychology to acquit Kairova, for example, he can at first glance come across as rejecting physiological explanations for defendants' actions altogether. With the Kornilova case, however, we see Dostoevsky's acknowledgement of the physiological effects of pregnancy on one's unconscious and ability to control one's impulses. Although his stances on these two cases appear contradictory in their seeming rejection of materialist claims in one instance and later rejection of a purely spiritualist perspective in the other, Dostoevsky's approach is in fact in line with the most recent developments in scientific views on the psyche at the time.

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[150] Ibid, 23: 19. "Кстати, я уж воображаю себе невольно, как эту мачеху защищать адвокаты: и безвыходность-то положения, и молодая жена у вдовца, выданная за него насильно или вышедшая ошибкой. Тут пойдут картины бедного быта бедных людей, вечная работа. Она, простодушная, невинная, выходя, думала как неопытная девочка (при нашем-то воспитании особенно!), что замужем одни только радости, а вместо радостей — стирка запачканного белья, стряпня, обмывание ребенка, — "г-да присяжные, она естественно должна была возненавидеть этого ребенка — (кто знает, ведь может найдется и такой "защитник", что начнет чернить ребенка и приищет в шестилетней девочке какие-нибудь скверные, ненавистные качества!), — в отчаянную минуту, в аффекте безумия, почти не помня себя, она схватывает эту девочку и... Г-да присяжные, кто бы из вас не сделал того же самого? Кто бы из вас не вышвырнул из окна ребенка?"

As I mentioned earlier, the dominant narrative in the mental sciences was heavily materialist, insisting that consciousness was influenced by the body and not the other way around, as well as arguing that women and other "deviants" and "degenerates" were particularly susceptible to the more "primitive," atavistic unconscious drives. This absolute insistence on biological determinism, was far from universal by the time of the trial, however. Prominent scientists like Alexander Bain and William Carpenter, among others, insisted that the scientific explanations for the unconscious were much more complicated than the rigid materialist/spiritualist divide accounted for. In his highly respected *Mind and Body: The Theories of Their Relation* (1873), for example, Bain bluntly relegates the reduction of mind to body to "the cruder forms of materialism" and goes on to discuss explicitly the fact that some scholars at this point are insisting that "*the mind and the body act upon each other."*[151] He ultimately disagrees with the latter perspective on the grounds that it assumes a separation between the mind and the body, whereas Bain himself argues that the two cannot actually be conceived apart from one another. Instead, he speaks of an inter-related entity akin to present-day discussions of the "mind-body."

It is in fact the ideas of William Benjamin Carpenter, however, another prominent British scientist introduced in Russia most notably through Lewes's extended favorable discussion of his work in *Physiology of Common Life,* that is particularly relevant to this discussion. Carpenter's

[151] Alexander Bain, *Mind and Body: The Theories of Their Relation* (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1873), 139 and 130. The work was translated into Russian as Aleksandr Ben, *Dusha i telo: Sochinenie Aleksandra Bena* (Kiev: F.A. Ioganson, 1880). Although the translation did not come out until 1880, as I mentioned earlier, Dostoevsky did own a copy of the Russian volume. Furthermore, G.H. Lewes references Bain's work extensively in his *Physiology of Common Life*, a work Dostoevsky owned. Lewes privileges Bain above all other psychologists in terms of his contributions to the study of volition and will and even devotes an entire section to him, titled "Mr. Bain's Ideas."

influential arguments surrounding the role of one's will in affecting and ultimately changing one's body and, by extension, one's physiological unconscious drives, resonates strongly with Dostoevsky's own stance on the cases. By attending to Carpenter's work, we in fact see that Dostoevsky's rejection of defense's employment of criminal psychology does not represent a dismissal of the relevance of mental sciences for the cases as a whole. Instead, Dostoevsky's views are in line with a rejection of the reductive, incomplete understanding of the scientific explanations presented by Utin and by the "crude" (to borrow Bain's word) materialistic stance prevalent in much of criminal psychology and mental sciences in general.

William Carpenter: Beyond the "Materialist" and "Spiritualist" Divide

William Benjamin Carpenter's chief work, *Principles of Mental Physiology* (1874), was translated into Russian around the time of the trials.[152] In *Principles,* Carpenter announces that he aims to investigate two seemingly opposing concepts central to his study: the dependence of automatic psychic activity on the material conditions of the environment, on the one hand, and the existence of an independent entity that controls this automatic action — the will — on the other.[153] Man's consciousness is the interaction between "I" and the "not I," Carpenter states in the opening of his work, proceeding to reveal explicitly his position outside the spiritualist/materialist binary by announcing that he will investigate not only the effects of the body on the mind, but the effects of the mind on the body as well.[154]

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[152] Uil'iam Bendzhamin Karpenter, *Osnovaniia fiziologii uma s ikh primeneniem k vospitaniiu i obrazovaniiu uma i izucheniiu ego boleznennykh sostoianii* (St. Petersburg: Znanie, 1877).

[153] Ibid*,* iii.

[154] Ibid*,* 1.

Furthermore, Carpenter argues for the need to investigate the mutual relationship between the body and the mind/soul, as opposed to insisting on the primacy of one over the other. The most interesting and useful area of investigation, he asserts, is where body and soul "touch and come together."[155] The physiologists' claim that certain states of, or changes in, the body influence the mind is self-evident, Carpenter says, as changes in psychic states due to intoxication or poisoning readily demonstrate. And yet, much more radically, Carpenter insists that the process works the other way around as well, with certain psychic states in fact influencing and changing the body.[156]

This mental ability to change the body, according to him, is inextricably tied to the individual's will. "We have within us a self-determining power which we call Will" Carpenter insists, adding, "it is in fact by virtue of the Will that we are *not* mere automata, mere puppets to be pulled by suggesting strings, capable of being played by everyone who shall have made himself master of our springs of action."[157] As I have mentioned, Carpenter is certainly not the first to theorize the will, but what makes his ideas particularly bold and original is his claim that the will can actually exert changes on the body, initially, through one's directed attention. He informs the reader:

> It is thus that each individual can perfect and utilize his natural gifts; by rigorously training them in the first instance, and then by exercising them only in the manner most fitted to expand and elevate, while restraining them from all that

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[155] Ibid, 1–2.

[156] Ibid, 13.

[157] Carpenter, 27–28.

> would limit and debase. In regard to every kind of mental activity that does *not* involve origination, the power of the Will, though limited to *selection*, is almost unbounded. […] By concentrating the mental gaze (so to speak) upon any object that may be within its reach, it can make use of this to bring in other objects by associative Suggestion. And, moreover, it can virtually determine what shall *not* be regarded by the Mind, through its power of keeping the Attention fixed *in some other direction*; and thus it can subdue the force of violent impulse and give to the conflict of opposing motives a result quite different from that which would ensue without its interference.[158]

Carpenter thus insists that one can change one's physiological, unconscious drives and, implicitly, the nervous system itself, through the cultivation of one's attention. Even more radically, he asserts that this skill is within the power of ordinary people and should be the main focus of spiritual and mental development. One can direct attention to one's natural strengths and talents, developing them further (these cannot be created, however, they must first be a given), as well as direct one's attention away from less desirable information and impulses. With passing time, things that we choose to focus our attention on, become "acquired habits" and, eventually, our automatic actions, bodies, and minds bear more and more of the effects exercised by our will and directed attention.[159]

Despite this hopeful picture, however, Carpenter cautions the reader:

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[158] Ibid, 25–26. Original emphasis and capitalization.

[159] Karpenter, 22–23. Original emphasis and capitalization. These views are strikingly similar to present day theories on neuroplasticity, which are currently at the cutting edge of neuroscience and according to which gradual, long-term exercise of "mindfulness" eventually leads to "re-wiring" of the brain.

> It may be freely admitted, however, that […] thinking Automata *do* exist; for there are many individuals whose Will has never been called into due exercise, and who gradually or almost entirely lose the power of exerting it, becoming mere creatures of habit and impulse; *and there are others in whom […] such Automatic states are of an occasional occurrence, whilst in others, again, they may be artificially induced*.[160]

From "Creature" to "Creation": Rethinking Personal Responsibility

Carpenter's investigation of the way body and mind interact and the effect they have on one another complicates notions of personal responsibility and potential for individual's future regeneration. As he promises in the opening of his book, Carpenter emphasizes both body *and* the mind in exploring human behavior and choice. One's personal responsibility, for example, is in part limited by one's heredity and biology. The "natural gifts" available for cultivation cannot be created, but are a biological given. At the same time, however, the individual is responsible for "training" herself through directing attention and re-inforcing of certain impulses, eventually making them automatic by "coding" them into one's nervous system. Dostoevsky's approach to personal responsibility in the *Diary'*s cases is very similar, although his outlook places more emphasis on the psyche, as opposed to the body. For Carpenter, for example, the physiological aspect of the unconscious drives is much more powerful (precisely because it is initially unconscious). For Dostoevsky, in turn, whose approach in part resonates with Carus's view that the psyche (and by extension the unconscious) is the more powerful source of both positive and negative drives, the psyche is ultimately privileged over (but not independent of) the body.

[160] Carpenter, 27. My emphasis.

In light of these scientific views, Dostoevsky's approach to the Kairova and Kornilova cases does not in fact appear self-contradictory. Kairova is both responsible for her actions, and yet worthy of compassion because that responsibility is limited. Heredity and biology play a role in her predispositions and behavior, but they do not eliminate personal responsibility altogether. Dostoevsky's description of Kairova resonates strongly with Carpenter's description of the "automatum," or a person who has never exercised her will consciously and has become a "mere creature of habit and impulse." The author describes Kairova as "something so unserious, so disorganized [*bezalabernoe*], not understanding anything, something unfinished, empty, impulsive [*predaiushcheesia*], not in control of itself, [and] mediocre [*seredinnoe*]," also calling her a "disorderly and unstable [*shataiushchaiasia*] soul."[161] Her moment of self-consciousness that Dostoevsky imagines in the *Diary* simply never comes. She does not recognize her guilt as such and, now that both the defense and the jury have reinforced her previous faulty beliefs, she lost an important chance for conscious reflection and the opportunity to exercise her will at last. Did Kairova have such moments of self-awareness in the past, intentionally having failed to "organize" her life and make her impulses less "wild?" Neither Dostoevsky nor we can know. Her lifestyle and previous choices, however, reinforced the "violent impulses" she was predisposed for, debasing her, instead of elevating, encoding those automatic impulses even further into her nervous system and making such actions more and more likely in the future. She is guilty, Dostoevsky asserts, and yet "she knows not what she does" — all while her actions are making future uncontrolled impulses and violent outbursts more likely.

The concept of the unconscious itself simultaneously becomes more fluid and more defined in light of Carpenter's and Bain's theories. Lewes summarizes pithily the main issue at

[161] *Pss,* 23: 8.

hand, "To have sensations and to be conscious of sensations is one and the same thing. To *have* a sensation and to *know* that we have it are two things, not one thing. Knowledge cannot exist without consciousness; but consciousness may, and often does, exist without knowledge."[162] Put more simply, one can be conscious, but not "know" what one does. And yet, although many unconscious impulses (especially physiological ones, like breathing or heartbeat, for example) are primarily outside our awareness and control, not all of the unconscious is. By exercising one's attention, the individual has control over what eventually becomes habitual and thus unconscious (outside of our awareness or volition). By training one's attention on "positive" things, one therefore makes it much more likely that future unconscious impulses will be less likely to be "negative" or violent (according to Carpenter).

To return to the cases: if Kairova is akin to Carpenter's "automatum," with her acquittal as yet another reinforcement of a habitual life of impulsive self-indulgence, Kornilova's violent automatic actions have been "artificially induced" (to borrow Carpenter's phrase) by her pregnancy. Whereas Kairova's chances for moral regeneration after the case are low, Kornilova's prospects for future betterment are very high. Unlike the "morally confused" Kairova who has not been consciously exercising her will, Kornilova fully admits her guilt and accepts responsibility for her actions. According to Dostoevsky, Kornilova told him that she "harbored ill will, but it's as if this was not at all [her] own will, but someone else's," adding that she also "didn't want to go to the precinct [after the crime], but came as if on [her] own."[163] The

[162] Lewes, *Physiology of Common Life,* II: 48.

[163] *Pss,* 24: 39. "Пожелала злое, только совсем уж тут не моя как бы воля была, а чья то чужая." "Идти в участок совсем не хотела, а как то так сама пришла туда, не знаю зачем."

author himself, in turn, adds that she acted "as if in a delirium [*v bredu*], 'as if not of her own will,' despite full consciousness [soznanie]."[164]

Kornilova's automatic state is thus characterized by both violent *and* moral unconscious drives. She acted "as if she were someone else" both when she threw her step-daughter out of the window, but also when she came to the precinct to turn herself in. Thus, even in the automatic state after the commission of her crime, she still behaves in a "moral" fashion. In light of Carpenter's views, previous exertion of Kornilova's will, it seems, has already made her unconscious behavior in part moral. Absent the pathological effects of pregnancy, Kornilova's temporarily weakened ability to resist the remaining negative impulses, it seems, would be restored, whereas her commitment to morality would ensure continued influence of her will on her body.

This prospect is further reinforced by Kornilova's prison warden's testimony about the woman's complete personality change while in custody. Dostoevsky reports the warden saying, "It was a completely different creature [*sushchestvo*] — coarse, mean — which suddenly, after two to three weeks, completely changed: there appeared a creature that was meek, quiet, and affectionate."[165] The word "creature" in the passage is used in two distinct ways: the first instance emphasizes the animalistic, inhuman qualities of Kornilova. She is referred to as "it," and the animalistic qualities accompanying her "creaturely" state resonate strongly with the atavistic unconscious drives that have erupted due to her temporarily disabled restraint. The second usage of the word "creature" in the same sentence, however, gives it the connotations of

[164] Ibid*,* 43.

[165] Ibid. "Это было совсем другое существо, грубое, злое, и вдруг через две-три недели совсем изменившееся: явилось существо кроткое, тихое, ласковое."

"that, which has been created," ostensibly, by Kornilova herself through her habitual exercise of will.[166] Dostoevsky himself once again explains this change as "the passing of the well-known, illness-inducing stage of pregnancy — a period of an *ill will* and 'insanity without insanity.'"[167] Kornilova's "abnormal" state in turn, is once again characterized as a condition of a faulty will, or a will that cannot be properly asserted.

To conclude, Dostoevsky's engagement with the Kairova and the Kornilova cases reveals a nuanced stance on personal responsibility and intentionality that both opposes the dominant, heavily materialist narrative in the mental sciences of the time and simultaneously resonates with the emerging theories during his time that trouble the materialist/spiritualist divide. Although his initial criticism of medical testimony in the Kairova case at first appears as a disavowal of determinist scientific explanations for human behavior altogether, his views in the Kornilova case indicate that he rejects *reductive* materialist scientific approaches to human behavior instead. Whereas popularly presented scientific theories in the courtroom primarily stressed materialist biological and environmental determinism, Dostoevsky's simultaneous insistence on personal responsibility *and* its limitations resonates with the theories of Alexander Bain and especially William Benjamin Carpenter. Both Dostoevsky and these psychologists agree on the fact that heredity and biology do in fact dictate certain aspects of human behavior, but do not, however, eliminate personal responsibility for one's choices altogether or definitively determine

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[166] Dostoevsky repeats the same construction again: "Г-жа А. П. Б. сообщила мне, между прочим, одно любопытное свое наблюдение, а именно: когда вступила к ним в острог Корнилова (вскоре после преступления), то это было совсем как бы другое существо, грубое, невежливое, злое, скорое на злые ответы. Но не прошло двух-трех недель, как она совсем и как-то вдруг изменилась: явилось существо доброе, простодушное, кроткое, 'и вот так и до сих пор.'" Kornilova, initially referred to as "it" and "the creature" becomes a "she" and a "creation" by the end of the passage.

[167] Ibid. My emphasis.

one’s future behavior. Each person, in turn, in addition to containing a physiologically based atavistic unconscious “creature” within, also bears the responsibility to craft oneself continually as one's own "creation" through exertion of will and gradual bodily transformation as well.

CHAPTER THREE

THE GHOST IN HIS NERVES: HYSTERIA AND TRANSGENERATIONAL TRAUMATIC INHERITANCE IN *THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV*

> "Then turn to the dead, listen to their lament, and accept them with love."[168]

In Chapter Two, we explored in more detail nineteenth-century theories of the unconscious and their relationship to the materialist/spiritualist divide surrounding the relationship between the human body and soul. We saw that, although strictly materialist views were predominant in popular debates and in many branches of mental sciences (like criminal psychology), other scientists were beginning to problematize this (in their view) reductive divide. Having explored the significant differences between the nineteenth-century theories of the unconscious and those of their (post)Freudian counterparts, we now turn to two other concepts central to the delineation of nineteenth-century shock from modern-day trauma: memory and the hysterical end of the shock spectrum. In this chapter then, we turn to the fundamental differences in nineteenth-century conceptualizations of memory, as well as to the nineteenth-century theoretical antecedent of trauma — hysteria — while using Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880) as a case study.

In Part I, Book 3 of the novel, Alesha Karamazov re-enacts his mother's hysterical fit after hearing about the way his father, Fedor Pavlovich, had humiliated his wife by desecrating her icon.

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[168] Carl G. Jung, *The Red Book: A Reader's Edition,* Mark Kyburts, et al, trans. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2012), 344.

> From the very moment his father began to talk about his mother, Alesha's face, little-by-little, began to change. He turned red, his eyes began to glow, his lips twitched. […] Alesha suddenly experienced something very strange, as the *exact* [*toch' v* toch'] same thing that [his father] just described about the *klikusha* now happened to him. Alesha suddenly jumped up from behind the table, threw up his arms *exactly* [*toch' v* toch'] as, according to the story, his mother did, then closed his face with his hands, fell back onto the chair, as if cut down, and thus began to shake all over in a hysterical fit of sudden, convulsive, and silent tears. Alesha's striking similarity to his mother especially stunned the old man.[169]

Something both surprising and confusing takes place in this scene, as Alesha appears to reenact physically the exact actions of his mother, without having witnessed them in the past. Twice Dostoevsky highlights this exactitude, for example, by using the phrase "*toch' v toch*"[170] in the passage. In a sense, Alesha appears to be physically over-taken or possessed by his mother's unprocessed past pain. Furthermore, his sudden mood changes throughout the novel, his personality shifts, emotional outbursts, and, most importantly, the experiences with the

[169] *Pss,* 14: 126–27. My emphasis. "[Алеша] с самого того времени, как [отец] заговорил о его матери, мало помалу стал изменяться в лице. Он покраснел, глаза его загорелись, губы вздрогнули... [...] с Алешей вдруг произошло нечто очень странное, а именно с ним вдруг повторилось *точь-в-точь* то же самое, что сейчас только [его отец] рассказал про 'кликушу.' Алеша вдруг вскочил из-за стола, *точь-в-точь* как, по рассказу, мать его, всплеснул руками, потом закрыл ими лицо, упал как подкошенный на стул и так затрясся вдруг весь от истерического припадка внезапных, сотрясающих и неслышных слез. Необычайное сходство с матерью особенно поразило старика."

[170] Although lacking exact English-language equivalent, the literal translation references point-by-point exactitude.

disturbing childhood memory of his mother from when he was three,[171] which haunts him for the rest of his life, as it returns in photographic vividness and exactitude, all point to an underlying psychic dynamic of repetition and re-enactment that resonates strongly with contemporary conceptualizations of psychic trauma. Although the role of trauma in *The Brothers Karamazov,* as well as in Dostoevsky's other works, is a topic for the most part ignored by literary scholarship, thus presenting a rich potential ground for analysis, one should be cautious about retrospectively diagnosing Alesha or any other characters by importing present-day trauma theory into the world of the novel(s). As I argue in my introduction, such a move, by itself, would assume trauma theory to be a timeless, universally applicable entity and, in its ahistoricity, would ignore conceptualizations of trauma-like psychic injury[172] contemporary to the work itself.

In many ways, the *Brothers Karamazov,* and the passage above in particular, is ideal for highlighting interpretive challenges connected to analyzing representations of trauma-like psychic wounding in Dostoevsky's work and in nineteenth-century literature in general. One must ask: In the face of literary works that may readily lend themselves to (post)psychoanalytic[173] "traumatic readings," how does one engage with these theories, while at

[171] It is not entirely clear whether Alesha is three or four at the time of the memory and eventual loss of his mother. The original states that he was "*vsego lish' po chetvertom godu,"* which is often translated as meaning that he was either four or "in his fourth year," meaning not yet four. Critics have assumed both ages in previous analyses. I will refer to him as being three, with the understanding that the exact age is ambiguous.

[172] As I mentioned earlier, I am using the term "psychic injury" in order to create and invoke a more neutral terminology for "trauma" that can encompass both nineteenth- and post-nineteenth-century understandings of the concept.

[173] As I mentioned earlier, throughout, I am using the term "(post)psychoanalytic" loosely and specifically in reference to trauma theory (both Freud's and of those trauma scholars explicitly relying on Freud's ideas). For the purposes of this discussion, I am not referring to

the same time preserving a sense of historicity in one's analysis and engaging with the theories of the author's own time? As already mentioned, if one is to take a (post)psychoanalytic traumatic approach to the textual issues outlined above, then Alesha appears "haunted" both by the repressed personal traumatic memories of his dead mother and, more fascinatingly, by the "transgenerational traumatic phantom"[174] inherited from her and never directly experienced by Alesha himself.

At the same time, however, when the reader engages the nineteenth-century theories of the unconscious, memory, heredity, and hysteria, a strikingly different picture emerges: as we saw in Chapter One, psychic repression, a concept pivotal to the (post)psychoanalytic theories of trauma and "psychic haunting," does not exist at this time, whereas conceptualizations of memory are strikingly physiologized and closely linked to heredity and degeneration. Familial psychic inheritance, in turn, is also conceptualized in primarily physiological terms, as inherited and experienced first and foremost through the body. Similarly to my usage of the term "psychic injury," I use the broad term “familial psychic inheritance” in order to engage more neutral terminology (applicable to both the nineteenth and post-nineteenth century) in reference to memory (both conscious and/or physical) transmitted to subsequent generations.

In this chapter, therefore, I explore nineteenth-century conceptualizations of psychic injury and put them into a two-directional conversation with present-day trauma theory. I start by analyzing the haunting quality of the memory of Alesha's mother in the work, contextualizing

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psychoanalytic readings in general or to the breadth of work that has been done on trauma outside of the humanities.

[174] Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 171. Mentioned briefly here, this concept will later be discussed in more detail.

my analysis in present-day trauma theory. I then turn to the mental sciences of Dostoevsky's time. Since conceptualizations of memory figure prominently in today's theories of trauma, yet differ significantly from their nineteenth-century predecessors, I highlight the most striking differences. I then briefly revisit the delineation of the concept of trauma from that of nineteenth-century shock, highlighting again the two ends of the shock spectrum: the so-called hysterical and neurasthenic ends. I then go on to explore the hysterical end of the spectrum, including its specifically Russian version — *klikushestvo* — in the context of its ties to theories of transgenerational psychic inheritance in *The Brothers Karamazov.*

Ultimately, I argue that the work's engagement with nineteenth-century theories of psychic injury provides a largely overlooked important additional insight into the novel. I contend that Dostoevsky's engagement with psychic injury in his work must be examined in the context of the scientific paradigm of his time. I argue that he manages both to uphold nineteenth-century scientific premises like the physiological concepts of "organic" and "collective memory,"[175] while also simultaneously polemicizing against the biological determinism associated with degeneration and illness in general. More fascinatingly, in its resistance to the latter, Dostoevsky's work also in part foresees the (post)psychoanalytic traumatic conceptualizations of the workings of the psyche, a fact that in part helps explain why his work so readily lends itself to those interpretations. To do one reading, without engaging the other, I argue, would lead one to miss yet another layer of Dostoevsky's work.

[175] The concepts of “organic memory” and “collective memory” will be discussed in more detail later.

Memory in the Novel and Alesha's Illness in Previous Criticism

As Dostoevsky's *magnum opus, The Brothers Karamazov* has been analyzed from a multitute of approaches. Many scholars have viewed it, first and foremost, as a philosophical work, whereas others have approached it as a work of a religious credo. Others still have analyzed the novel in light of its socio-political commentary on its time, and much excellent work has been done on tracing Dostoevsky's sources, circumstances of the novel's composition, as well as the author's own biography. In terms of work done specifically on memory in the novel, and on Alesha's illness in particular, the sources narrow substantially.

In "Memory in *The Brothers Karamazov,*" Robert Belknap explores memory as a thematic thread in the novel as a whole and argues that remembering in the work (primarily associated with Alesha and Zosima) is connected with morality, love, and family, whereas forgetting is associated with neglect and debauchery.[176] Belknap in part connects his analysis to what he, rather broadly, calls the sciences of "mnemonics," or the nineteenth-century scientific traditions of investigating memory and the mind.[177] Although in his discussion he provides a brief useful overview of possible scientific sources on memory available to Dostoevsky, it is very limited in scope. Belknap focuses on memory, for example, primarily in terms of its connection to the scientific traditions surrounding hypnosis, in order to establish the fact that memory's potential latency and the possibility of its later return was an established scientific fact familiar to Dostoevsky himself. Ultimately, Belknap privileges the final scene between Alesha

[176] Robert L. Belknap, "Memory in *The Brothers Karamazov,*" in *Dostoevsky: New Perspectives*, ed. Robert L. Jackson (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1984), 235.

[177] Ibid, 227.

and the boys (in which Alesha memorializes Iliusha), arguing that in this speech Dostoevsky presents memory as an "actual moral force, latent for years, perhaps, as science, literature, and personal experience taught him it could be, but offering the immortality on earth, which had concerned him early in his career, and at the same time offering a rationally acceptable repository for the good which was indispensable for his theodicy."[178]

The most in-depth study of memory in the novel to date, and one I engage most extensively with in this chapter, is Diane Oenning Thompson's *The Brothers Karamazov and the Poetics of Memory.* Thompson sets out to discover how Dostoevsky's use of memory in the novel aids him in his search for universals and in "his major project to synthesize his Christian ideal with aesthetic form."[179] Thompson argues for an opposition between forms of "affirmative" and "negative" memory in the novel, or forms of memory that "affirm the system of Christian memory or those that negate it," respectively.[180] She in turn designates Alesha and Zosima as the primary carriers of the former and Fedor Pavlovich, Ivan, and Smerdiakov as the primary carriers of the latter type of memory. Thompson reads Alesha's memory as a three-year-old as a spiritual experience of an affirmative memory that animates his "hagiographic" journey throughout the whole novel, drawing him both to Skotoprigon'evsk and to Zosima's monastery.[181]

In *Holy Foolishness: Dostoevsky's Novels and the Poetics of Cultural Critique,* Harriet Murav also in part reads Alesha in connection to his "hagiographic" journey. She argues that in

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[178] Ibid, 242.

[179] Diane Oenning Thompson, *The Brothers Karamazov and the Poetics of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), xiii.

[180] Ibid, 74.

[181] Ibid*,* 72–126.

The Brothers Karamazov, the figure of the holy fool (*iurodivyi*), or the Russian Christian saint who not only imitates Christ, but also willingly accepts suffering and humiliation by committing acts of folly, is at the center of the novel's concerns with collective national salvation. Alesha, in turn, is the central "holy fool" figure in the novel, although ultimately part of a full "gallery" of *iurodivyi* figures in the work. Murav asserts that in the novel "Dostoevsky sought to reinscribe Russian culture with a vision of its own salvation, in which the holy fool plays a paradoxically central role."[182] She also points out that the great philosophical and theological questions of the novel should not be analyzed in isolation from its historical and cultural context, although their interpretation should not be limited by that context either.[183]

Various other scholars devote attention specifically to Alesha's memory as a three-year-old.[184] Most notable among them are Edward Wasiliok and Michael R. Katz. In his "Introduction" to *The Notebooks for The Brothers Karamazov*, for example, Wasiolek singles out the memory primarily for emphasizing the role of "amplification of detail" in creation of a dramatic scene.[185] In "The Theme of Maternity in Alesha Karamazov's Four-Year-Old Memory," in turn, Katz reads the scene as an "allegorical custody battle" between Alesha's three maternal figures — his biological mother (Sof'ia Ivanovna), the proxy mother (the Nurse), and the spiritual mother (the Mother of God) — arguing that this scene is primarily dominated by the

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[182] Murav, *Holy Foolishness,* 129.

[183] Ibid.

[184] This scene is widely discussed in criticism; in particular, see Jean Drouilly, "L'image du soleil couchant dans l'ouevre de Dostoievski," in *Etudes slaves et est-europeennes,* IX (1974), 3–22 and S. Durylin, "Ob odnom simvole u Dostoevskogo," in *Dostoevskij* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennaia akademiia khudozhestvennykh nauk, 1928), 163–98.

[185] Edward Wasiolek, ed. and trans., *The Notebooks for the Brothers Karamazov* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 13.

theme of motherhood that in turn acts as a guiding force for Alesha throughout the novel and is in part mirrored by Dmitrii's dream of the "babe."[186]

James Rice's analysis of both Alesha's fit and of his illness in general in "The Covert Design of *The Brothers Karamazov:* Alesha's Pathology and Dialectic" is particularly relevant for my work. Whereas for the mentioned critics the scientific dimension of Dostoevsky's engagement with memory does not reflect their primary focus of investigation, sciences of the mind and mental pathology are Rice's central concern. Relying primarily on J.J. Moreau's and Richard von Kraft-Ebbing's work, Rice argues that Alesha is a "textbook case" of a nineteenth-century "visionary" hysteric (with epileptoid elements), whose illness signals Dostoevsky's special plans for him in the (alleged) future sequel of the novel.[187] Rice argues for two possible futures for Alesha in the unwritten continuation of the work: becoming a revolutionary and eventually assassinating the tsar, on the one hand, and continued spiritual growth, on the other. Rice mostly dismisses the latter possibility and focuses his analysis on the former scenario instead. Dostoevsky's central aim in portraying Alesha's illness, Rice argues, is to emphasize his "pathological potentiality" for both future evil and good.[188] Rice in turn speculates that the locus of Alesha's illness is his "traumatic" witnessing of his mother's sexual abuse at the hands of his

[186] Michael R. Katz, "The Theme of Maternity in Alesha Karamazov's Four-Year-Old Memory," *Slavic and East European Journal* 34:4 (1990), 509.

[187] James L. Rice, "The Covert Design of *The Brothers Karamazov:* Alesha's Pathology and Dialectic," *Slavic Review* 68:2 (2009), 359.

[188] Ibid, 371.

father. In addition, according to him, Alesha's first fit is brought on by the "Oedipal challenge" by his father, as the latter describes his sexualized mistreatment of Sof'ia Ivanovna.[189]

Although Rice points out the central role of Alesha's hysteria in the novel, as well as bringing trauma into the discussion, his analysis contains a number of problems. By his own admission, a large part of his argument depends on Dostoevsky's special plans for Alesha in the novel's sequel. Those plans for the continuation of the work, however, are still highly contested, and Rice's own contribution to the argument does not come across as entirely convincing. Furthermore, his speculations about the "traumatic locus" of Alesha's pathology rely on alleged events that are not described in the novel. More importantly, Rice uses the term "trauma" in passing, without defining it or even specifying what discourse(s) he refers to. Most importantly, Rice, like previous critics, overlooks two important dimensions that attend Dostoevsky's representations of memory, trauma, and hysteria in the novel: the *physiological* nature of "pathological" memory transmitted across generations specifically through the body (theorized in the mental sciences of the time), as well as the national implications of such transmission. It is to these two central questions that my own analysis in this chapter turns.

A Life Forgotten, Yet Not Put to Rest

Before Alesha's mother "haunts" him through his hysterical symptoms or through his sole conscious, "photographic" memory of her, however, the novel establishes her as a spectral presence by simultaneously highlighting the erasure of her memory from the work and the repeated rupturing of that absence with her figure's sudden reappearances. Connecting remembering with morality, love, and family, on the one hand, and forgetting with debauchery

[189] Ibid, 364.

and neglect, on the other, in the novel, Belknap argues that, from the very beginning, the work sets up a careful opposition between Alesha as the one who remembers and Fedor Pavlovich as the one who forgets.[190] While agreeing with Belknap's general argument, I would add that the binary opposition between remembering and forgetting, between Alesha and Fedor Pavlovich, becomes repeatedly disrupted by the third figure — Sof'ia Ivanovna. She both represents the ultimate icon of purity and morality in the novel and a source of memory that simply refuses to be fully forgotten.

The only time we get a coherent narrative about Sof'ia Ivanovna is through the narrator's brief retrospective of her life and, despite the fact that she directly occupies a very small number of pages, she nonetheless repeatedly invades the work indirectly through her son. Ultimately, Sof'ia Ivanovna epitomizes the martyred, abused feminine that testifies of the corrupt, unbalanced state of the family. Like any ghost, she carries an unheard message, which becomes relayed to Alesha: the family's road to eventual self-destruction need not end in a total annihilation of the Karamazov line.

Since Sof'ia Ivanovna's story becomes buried shortly after its introduction in the first book of Part I, with even her name all but erased and instead replaced by the pathologized title *klikusha,* it would be worth-while to re-visit briefly her tale. Sof'ia Ivanovna's life, like that of her similarly nameless prototype in "The Meek One" (1876),[191] is one of un-alleviated and ultimately un-witnessed suffering. A girl of sixteen when she meets and elopes with Fedor Pavlovich, Sof'ia

[190] Belknap, "Memory in *The Brothers Karamazov,*" 235.

[191] "Krotkaia," written and published in 1876; conceived in 1869.

Ivanovna is an orphaned daughter of some "obscure deacon"[192] and has been "without relations"[193] since early childhood. She lives with a wealthy, but tyrannical general's widow, and the narrator informs us of having "heard that the orphan girl, a meek and gentle creature, was once cut down from a noose […] so terrible were her sufferings from the caprice and everlasting nagging of this old woman."[194]

When, out of inexperience and desperation, Sof'ia Ivanovna marries Fedor Pavlovich, she exchanges an ignorant tyrant for a self-aware one, who fully realizes and savors his abuses. Eventually, we are told, "this unhappy young woman, kept in terror from her childhood, fell into some sort of nervous women's disease, most frequently found in peasant women, who, because of it, are called *klikushi*. Because of this illness, with its terrible hysterical fits, the sick woman at times even lost her reason."[195] As both Belknap and Thompson point out, after Sof'ia Ivanovna's death, she is promptly forgotten.[196] The only legacy left to testify of her previous existence is comprised of the modest mourning gestures of the servant Grigorii and the woman's children. Even Sof'ia Ivanovna's past benefactress reportedly pronounces only one phrase on the subject of

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[192] *Pss,* 14: 12.

[193] Ibid.

[194] *Pss,* 14: 12–13. "Подробностей не знаю, но слышал лишь то, что будто воспитанницу, кроткую, незлобивую и безответную, раз сняли с петли, которую она привесила на гвозде в чулане, — до того тяжело было ей переносить своенравие и вечные попреки этой […] старухи […]."

[195] Ibid. "Впоследствии с несчастною, с самого детства запуганною молодою женщиной произошло в роде какой-то нервной женской болезни, встречаемой чаще всего в простонародьи у деревенских баб, именуемых за эту болезнь кликушами. От этой болезни, со страшными истерическими припадками, больная временами даже теряла рассудок."

[196] Belknap, "Memory in *The Brothers Karamazov,*" 234; Thompson, 171.

her former ward's suffering and death: "It serves her right. God has punished her for her ingratitude."[197]

It is this collective memory vacuum, with an almost complete absence of mourning for Alesha's mother, that Alexei both highlights and disrupts with his sudden arrival in Skotoprigonevsk. The only person who remembers the location of Sof'ia Ivanovna's grave or has tended to it is Fedor Pavlovich's begrudgingly loyal servant Grigorii. Fedor Pavlovich himself, in turn, had left for Odessa not long after Sof'ia Ivanovna's death, "abandoning not only the graves, but all his memories as well."[198] Later, in a true move of perverse buffoonery, Fedor Pavlovich responds to Alesha's visit to his mother's grave by donating a thousand rubles for the singing of the requiem for his first wife, not for Sof'ia Ivanovna. Like many of Karamazov Senior's actions, this decision not only perversely celebrates his lack of remorse, re-creating the past, but also, in a move akin to that of a courtly jester or a holy fool,[199] brings attention to a deeper un-acknowledged truth: collective amnesia in the face of tortured and sacrificed innocence represented by Sof'ia Ivanovna.

Alesha resurrects the specter of his mother's memory even before he "channels" her through his fit. As Thompson points out, he both unwittingly follows a personal initial quest for recovery of memory and unknowingly conjures up his mother's image in the minds of those who knew her with his own resemblance to her. From the beginning, the process is animated by unidentified, seemingly unconscious forces, thus foreshadowing the woman's eventual full-

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[197] *Pss,* 14: 12–13. “Так ей и надо, это ей бог за неблагодарность послал.”

[198] *Pss,* 14: 22. “[…] махнув рукой не только на могилы, но и на все свои воспоминания.”

[199] For further exploration of buffoonery and holy foolishness specifically in the novel, see Murav's *Holy Foolishness,* especially pages 124–71.

blown spectral return in Alesha's possession by her memory.[200] We are informed, for example, that the main reason Alesha returns to Skotoprigon'evsk is in order to find his mother's grave, although the narrator hastens to add that "it's doubtful that this fully explained the reasons for his arrival. Most likely he did not know and, for the life of him, could not have explained what it was, exactly, that seemed to have arisen suddenly from his soul and began to draw him irresistibly onto some new, unknown, but already unavoidable path."[201]

Alesha's resemblance to his mother and its resonance in the minds of those that knew her both unwittingly highlights and disrupts the memory vacuum mentioned earlier and further emphasizes his unknowing participation in a mysterious, unidentified process that surpasses his own consciousness and will. Sof'ia Ivanovna's illness serves as a reference point throughout: the townspeople, for example, immediately identify Alesha as the son of Fedor Pavlovich's second wife, "that *klikusha."*[202] Grigorii takes Alesha to "*klikusha's"* grave, the narrator informs us, whereas the term itself, replaces Sof'ia Ivanovna's actual name once she marries Fedor Pavlovich, and the reader is hard-pressed to remember what she was originally called.[203] It is as if she loses all sense of identity and becomes defined solely by her illness. Even in death, her illness is one of the main legacies passed on to her son.

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[200] Thompson also comments on these forces beyond Alesha's will, although she reads them in terms of "delayed, but inevitable workings of Providence," 85.

[201] *Pss,* 14: 21. “Но вряд ли этим исчерпывалась вся причина его приезда. Всего вероятнее, что он тогда и сам не знал и не смог бы ни за что объяснить: что именно такое как бы поднялось вдруг из его души и неотразимо повлекло его на какую-то новую, неведомую, но неизбежную уже дорогу."

[202] The meaning of the term *klikusha* will be explored in more detail later.

[203] *Pss,* 14: 22.

In many ways Alesha assumes the place of his mother in the Karamazov family system, functioning both as a source of potential moral edification and simultaneously serving as a source of temptation for the external impulses in others that ultimately destroyed his mother. The innocence and incorruptibility that originally attracted Karamazov Senior to Sof'ia Ivanovna now tempt him and the rest of the family through Alesha: the meekness and purity can either be protected and nurtured, savored for their morally edifying effects, or profaned and abused, providing a source of perverse pleasure in the process. Fedor Pavlovich, we are informed, follows both impulses. On the one hand, he experiences "some sort of moral effect"[204] from his interactions with Alesha and from his association of his son with the memory of Sof'ia Ivanovna. " 'Do you know,' he began often to say, looking at Alesha, 'that you look like her, the *klikusha?'"*[205] Alongside the implicit sentimentality of such comparisons, however, Fedor Pavlovich also enjoys torturing Alesha in ways similar to his past humiliations of his wife; he profanes religious and spiritual values his son holds dear and tortures him with talks of pleasures of the flesh. Thus, through Alesha, the conflicts of the past are uncannily re-staged, but with one major difference: this time they contain a constant lingering potential to change the repeating story.

[204] *Pss,* 14: 21. “Приезд Алеши как бы подействовал на него даже с нравственной стороны, как бы проснулось в этом безвременном старике из того, что давно уже заглохло в душе его […]” Thompson argues that “Fyodor changes slightly, but significantly” in terms of his moral standing in the course of the novel” due to his growing love for his son. Thompson, 171–75. My general impression is that he toys with moral change through his buffoonery the same way he dramatizes and profanes its possibility during the family’s visit to Zosima.

[205] *Pss,* 14: 21–22. “Знаешь ли ты, — стал он часто говорить Алеше, приглядываясь к нему, — что ты на нее похож, на кликушу-то?”

A Picture Extinguished, a Corner Torn Off: Alesha Remembers

Given the general dialectic of an absence of memory disrupted by infrequent, yet unsettling, returns of the un-mourned, mistreated feminine discussed so far, it comes as no surprise that Alesha's own memory of his mother follows a similar pattern. Although he has only one conscious recollection of Sof'ia Ivanovna, that memory — the narrator insists on informing us twice — has an uncannily strong hold on him for the rest of his life.[206] The narrator shares:

> By the way, I have already mentioned that, having been left without a mother when only in his fourth year, he later remembered her for the rest of his life — her face, her caresses — "as if she were standing before me alive." Such memories can be remembered (and everyone knows it) even from a younger age, even from when one is two, but merely standing out through a whole lifetime like spots of light out of darkness, like a small corner torn out of a huge picture, which has all faded and disappeared except for that tiny corner. That's exactly how it was with him: He remembered one still summer evening, an open window, the slanting rays of the setting sun (those slanting rays were actually remembered most vividly of all); in a corner of the room the holy image, before it a lighted lamp, and on her knees before the image his mother, sobbing hysterically with shrieks and screams, snatching him up in both arms, embracing him tightly till it hurt, and praying for him to the Mother of God, holding him out in both arms to the image as though to put him under the Mother's protection ... And suddenly the nurse runs in and snatches him from her in terror. What a picture! Alesha remembered his mother's

[206] *Pss,* 14: 25.

face at that minute as well. He used to say that it was frenzied but beautiful, judging from what he could remember. But he rarely cared to entrust this memory to anyone.[207]

The passage particularly stands out in its emphasis of fragmentariness, repetition, mixed temporalities, and its insistence on recreation and repetition. In its photographic, and at times even cinematic qualities, this memory represents a textual fragment that lends itself surprisingly well to a present day "traumatic" reading. Furthermore, such a reading opens up new, previously unavailable textual interpretations that in turn sustain a consistent underlying narrative arc in the novel as a whole. In this reading, the haunting of the un-mourned, unwitnessed feminine is reflected on the level of an individual (Alesha's) psyche. The memory encapsulates the non-narrative, non-linguistic testimony of the specter and foreshadows its future return on the level of bodily haunting through Alesha's illness.

The memory's description, with its general impression of a visually exact, almost photographic imprint and an emphasis on its lack of integration in Alesha's overall

[207] *Pss,* 14: 25–26. "Кстати, я уже упоминал про него, что, оставшись после матери всего лишь по четвертому году, он запомнил ее потом на всю жизнь, ее лицо, ее ласки, 'точно как будто она стоит предо мной живая.' Такие воспоминания могут запоминаться (и это всем известно) даже и из более раннего возраста, даже с двухлетнего, но лишь выступая всю жизнь как бы светлыми точками из мрака, как бы вырванным уголком из огромной картины, которая вся погасла и исчезла, кроме этого только уголочка. Так точно было и с ним: он запомнил один вечер, летний, тихий, отворенное окно, косые лучи заходящего солнца (косые-то лучи и запомнились всего более), в комнате в углу образ, пред ним зажженную лампадку, а пред образом на коленях, рыдающую как в истерике, со взвизгиваниями и вскрикиваниями, мать свою, схватившую его в обе руки, обнявшую его крепко до боли и молящую за него Богородицу, протягивающую его из объятий своих обеими руками к образу как бы под покров Богородице... и вдруг вбегает нянька и вырывает его у нее в испуге. Вот картина! Алеша запомнил в тот миг и лицо своей матери: он говорил, что оно было исступленное, но прекрасное, судя по тому, сколько мог он припомнить. Но он редко кому любил поверять это воспоминание."

consciousness, resonates strongly with present day understandings of traumatic recall. As we already saw, both Freud and Cathy Caruth conceptualize trauma as a psychogenic wound of the mind, whose symptoms manifest themselves primarily through the dysfunction of memory. As we saw in Chapter One, for both scholars, traumatization results from an overwhelming event that renders the individual experiencing it helpless and unable to process it consciously. As a result, the experience becomes rendered unconscious, and yet repeatedly returns to consciousness in its "haunting" attempts to become integrated into it.[208]

Both scholars emphasize the literality of the returned material and the exact recreation of the original event in one's consciousness. Caruth's theories, in particular, privilege the visuality of this exact return, which may or may not be integrated with its original accompanying affect at the time of the re-enactment. Caruth's theoretical rendering of the return of the traumatic is particularly well captured by a metaphoric comparison to one's experience with a photographic snapshot: similarly to a photograph, the imprint of the original event is perfectly exact in its recreation; like the photo, the traumatic content re-animates the past, yet, at the same time, keeps it disconnected from its context and from any sort of integration in the narrativizable present.[209]

Similarly, the passage describing Alesha's memory privileges the visual qualities of the content's exact return, underscoring its lack of integration in his general consciousness. As with a photograph, the memory is outside of time, with its returns visually exact, and yet oddly disconnected from the event's original affect. It is as if the event itself is resurrected in its

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[208] Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 1–40; Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience,* 4.

[209] On the rich connections between photography and trauma theory, see particularly discussions surrounding Susan Sontag's *On Photography* (New York: Farrer, Straus and Giroux, 1977) and Roland Barthes's *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981).

exactitude, yet missing important aural and affective accompaniments. The emphasis on visuality in the scene is repeatedly highlighted by the narrator, as he compares the memory to "spots of light out of darkness, like a small corner torn out of a huge picture,[210] which has all faded and disappeared except for that tiny corner." The comparison emphasizes both the painting-like or photographic quality of the re-animation of this scene and the memory's fragmented nature in its isolation from "the rest of the faded picture" in Alesha's adult consciousness. At one point the narrator also exclaims "what a picture!" summing up the scene in front of him by temporarily freezing it in a "still." Alesha himself, in turn, experiences the visual re-animation of his mother in his memory, as he shares that he remembers her "as though she was standing before me alive." He also becomes imprinted with a momentary "snapshot" of his mother's face at the time of the fit.[211]

The initial privileging of the visual in the scene also points to the observer's (Alesha's) peculiar affective flatness at the time of the event and emphasizes the general absence of speech and narrative in the memory. The scene opens with a visual description of the room that emphasizes calmness and silence: "He remembered one still summer evening, an open window, the slanting rays of the setting sun (those slanting rays were actually remembered most vividly of all); in a corner of the room the holy image, before it a lighted little lamp…" The picture conveys stillness, silence, peace. Then, suddenly — echoing the violent, overwhelming intrusion of the traumatic event — we are invaded by the realization that during all this time the room is actually filled with the sounds of Alesha's "mother, sobbing hysterically with shrieks and screams,

[210] In Russian, the word for "picture" is not the same as for a "photograph." The original *kartina* used in the passage usually refers to a painting or an illustration.

[211] Thompson also comments on the visuality of the scene, connecting it with the importance of the Orthodox iconography (of the divine Mother and Child). 78–79.

snatching him up in both arms, embracing him tightly till it hurt, and praying for him to the Mother of God."

Initially, the terror and aural intensity of the scene are oddly supplanted by the visual beauty and calm, providing the impression of dulled affect, which becomes further emphasized by the fact that, despite the fear and physical pain associated with the scene, Alesha remembers "the slanted sun rays" most of all. This peculiar absence of feeling on Alesha's part, as well as his refusal (or inability, in part, due to his young age) to narrativize his experience, is also revealed earlier in the novel, when the narrator informs us that, despite his strong initial drive to locate and visit his mother's burial place, Alesha "showed no particular sensitivity at the sight of his mother's grave. He only listened to Grigorii's solemn and reasonable account of the erection of the memorial plaque, stood there for a while with a bowed head, and walked away without uttering a word."[212]

This absence of narrative and coherent speech in general is emphasized throughout the description of the memory scene. We are told that Alesha "rarely cared to entrust this memory to any one." The unusual Russian verb *poveriat'* in this sentence, similarly to its English counterpart "to entrust," shares a root with *doveriat',* or "to trust." Thus, the reference to the sharing of the memory in this context implies entrusting the listener with a revelation, with something vulnerable and possibly even sacred.[213] Both Freud and Caruth emphasize the individual's difficulties with narrativizing the traumatic, or the outright inability to do so. For Freud, the

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[212] *Pss,* 14: 22. "Алеша не выказал на могилке матери никакой особенной чувствительности; он только выслушал важный и резонный рассказ Григория о сооружении плиты, постоял понурившись и ушел, не вымолвив ни слова."

[213] Thompson also notes the absence of speech in the scene, once again attributing it to the emphasis on the graphic in Orthodox iconography, as opposed to the verbal in hagiography. 84.

process lies at the core of eventual integration of the traumatic material, as part of the "talking cure." For Caruth, in turn, the traumatic can never be faithfully narrativized, since, by its definition, it is overwhelming and wholly outside of language. The narrativization of the traumatic for her simultaneously serves as the paradoxical interplay between the ethical responsibility to witness the un-witnessed traumatic past and, simultaneously, a betrayal of the original event itself, since it can never be fully captured by words.

Dori Laub's theorizations of "bearing witness to the witness" of trauma in the context of a therapeutic relationship also resonate with the mentioned interpretation of Alesha's silence. Laub highlights both the importance of survivor's sharing for potential healing and the sacred nature of the act itself, also emphasizing the enormous amount of trust required from the sharer and the responsibility of witnessing needed from the listener.[214] Thus, Alesha's insistent silence about his mother gains more context, whereas narrative and coherent speech in the scene of his memory become replaced by affective expressions outside of language instead.[215] We are told in passing, for example, that Sof'ia Ivanovna is "praying […] to the Mother of God," but the passage instead emphasizes her non-narrative, non-linguistic communication of "shrieks" and "screams." The scene thus draws attention to Alesha's affective, non-linguistic psychic inheritance from his mother, which is encapsulated in and shared through the language of her illness's symptoms.

Further echoing the traumatic experience and its subsequent haunting return(s), the scene is troubled by mixed temporalities, with forms of the past, present, and future co-existing, and at

[214] Dori Laub, "Truth and Testimony: The Process and the Struggle," in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 61–76.

[215] Not including the semi-omniscient narrator himself.

times violently invading one another. The majority of the scene is narrated in the present progressive tense, until it suddenly becomes interrupted by the bursting in of Alesha's nurse and the switch to the present tense. The unexpectedness and violence of the interruption echo the previous ripping of silence and calmness by the sounds of the mother's fit and by the narrator's imagery for the overall preserved memory: "a corner ripped" from the whole. At the same time, however, the nurse's interruption and the switch to present tense also signal an escape from the "frozen bubble" of temporal entrapment in the traumatic, which knows no tense, refuses to stay in the past, invades the present and can even contaminate the future.

As Thompson points out, the past and future also co-exist in the scene, both encapsulating and re-creating one another through the icon of the Mother of God. The latter, for example, is re-created both literally and symbolically in the memory: through Alesha's remembrance, on the one hand, and through Sof'ia Ivanovna's actions who, similarly to the icon, is also holding a child. Both mothers love and protectively (in Sof'ia Ivanovna's case, also painfully) cradle their sons, yet both scenes already retrospectively foretell the boys' pre-destined suffering.[216] Both, the scene's present and its future, of course, are already encapsulated within the past of the memory itself. In addition, the narrator's metaphor for selectively retained memory — "like spots of light out of darkness, like a small corner torn out of a huge picture" — is already contained in the visual description of the scene itself, further emphasizing the mixed temporalities within it. In the memory, the room is gradually becoming dark, with "slanting rays of the setting sun" foretelling night, but the space also contains a single surviving source of light

[216] Thompson, once again, privileges the role of the Orthodox iconography in her interpretation of the mixed temporalities in the scene, arguing that this temporal coexistence underscores the "atemporality of sacred memory," which, in turn, is connected to the mounted "sacralized memory image" (the icon) central to the scene as a whole. 78.

— the "little lamp" in front of the icon. As already mentioned, the soon to be exclusively illuminated icon re-creates in itself the mother-son scene taking place in the room.

And yet despite the fact that the novel lends itself well to a "traumatic reading," opening previously unavailable avenues of interpretation, we cannot rely on this interpretive move alone. As we already saw, modern-day trauma and nineteenth-century shock have different genealogies and cannot be used interchangeably. We explored those differences in detail in Chapter One, but they are worth revisiting briefly here. Whereas trauma is conceptualized as an unconscious wound of the mind that manifests itself primarily through the dysfunction of memory, nineteenth-century shock relies on economic theories of the nervous system, in which experience involves timely processing of a succession of external stimuli and finite availability of nervous energy. In the context of the latter, shock-related pathology results either from excessive excitation of the nervous system, in which stimuli and external impressions are not processed in time and ultimately overwhelm the body and mind (on the hysterical end of the shock spectrum) or a physical lesion on the nervous system, which results from fatigue and excessive draining of nervous energy (on the neurasthenic end).[217] Therefore, in addition to engaging with modern trauma theory, we must also look at the novel's relationship with theories surrounding the hysterical end of the shock spectrum, contemporary to the work's own time.

Imprinted: To the End of the Line?

Given the fundamental differences between conceptualizations of trauma and shock, the original scene of interest in the novel (Alesha's fit) assumes new importance as a conceptual point of convergence for the topics discussed so far: hysteria, memory, and traumatic haunting

[217] Armstrong, 60–74; also, see a more detailed discussion in pages 50–54 of present work.

that transcends generations. Baffling as it may seem to the modern reader, Alesha's exact physical re-enactment of his mother's experience appears as much less strange when viewed in light of late nineteenth-century theories on organic and collective memory and the connections of both to heredity and hysteria (or the "over-excitement" end of the shock spectrum). The concept of organic memory is most closely associated with the French psychologist Theodule Ribot, but draws on already existing theories permeating the work of other prominent late nineteenth-century mental scientists writing about memory.[218] As we saw in Chapter One, Ribot identified two main types of memory: psychological and organic. The former referred to what was commonly thought of as memory, or to the associational process of recollection subject to conscious will. Organic memory, in turn, is similar to the psychological, but functions without the participation of consciousness.[219]

Ultimately, and more radically, we saw that Ribot argued that organic memory is not simply stored in the brain, but instead is localized in the nervous system, with every impression leaving a molecular trace.[220] Certain types of recollection, according to Ribot, therefore re-animate the actual body parts affected by the original past event. He describes such memory as

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[218] The most explicit example in Russian translation I have been able to find is in Genri Modsli's *Ob otnosheniiakh mezhdu telom i dukhom i mezhdu umstvennymi i drugimi rasstroistvami nervnoi sistemy*. "Каждая нервная клетка имеет память и не только каждый подобный орган, но и каждый органический элемент тела одарен ею. [...] Память есть способность органически отмечать действия впечатлений, — организация опыта; вспоминать — значит оживлять этот опыт, вызывать органический остаток к функциональной деятельности." 16–17.

[219] This specific book by Ribot came out in 1881 in French and was translated into English the same year. He had been publishing extensively before that, however, and, of course, Dostoevsky also read French. The earliest bibliographic reference I have been able to find in Russian is to its third translated edition from 1912. Ribo, 13.

[220] Ibid, 19 and 21.

"the acquired movements which constitute the memory of different organs — the eyes, hands, arm, and legs," adding that "[a] rich and extensive memory is not a collection of impressions, but an accumulation of dynamical associations."[221] More importantly, Ribot eventually goes on to add that memory is "a biological act: it is an impregnation" of experience directly on the various organs (tissues, muscles, including, but not necessarily, the brain).[222] Ribot's theories therefore imply that "impressions" can be left as both conscious memory and as direct "imprints" on the nervous system itself.

The latter possibility in particular highlights a crucial distinction between this nineteenth-century mode of conceptualizing memory and psychic injury from that of today's, with the latter's emphasis on narrativization for recovery from trauma. In conceptualizations of organic memory, the individual physically relives, instead of representing, the former wounding experience, and the body becomes a site of testimony that provides unmediated access to the events of the past without their mental representation or direct participation of the brain.

As we saw in Chapter One, the concept of collective memory, in turn, or memory of the species as a whole, including that of one's immediate ancestors, became increasingly physiologized during this time and associated with heredity and degeneration. As I demonstrated in Chapters One and Two, the benign view of the unconscious at mid-century, with its accompanying belief in the universal storage of impressions by the mind, gradually became replaced, as the century unfolded, by a more negative view of the unconscious as an atavistic

[221] Ribot, *Diseases of Memory,* 31.

[222] Ibid, 196; Ribo, 5–6.

storehouse of (wo)man's earlier stages of evolutionary development and of their accompanying primitive impulses.

When one combines the concepts of both organic and collective memory then, Alesha becomes marked as a pathologically feminized descendant of an infected, deviant family, ultimately destined for evolutionary self-destruction. Alesha's recreation of his mother's fit, for example, testifies not only of a degenerationally tainted matrilineal hysterical inheritance, but also bears evidence of internally inflicted and cyclically perpetuated familial violence, doomed increasingly to spin out of control with each generation. The medical literature of this time, for example, cites heredity as the primary cause of hysteria, but also lists so-called "moral shocks" (*moral'nye potriaseniia*)[223] as frequent origins for the disease.[224] Fedor Pavlovich's periodic marital rape and psychological torture of Alesha's mother, therefore, of which the incident with the desecration of the icon is but one example, serves both as a catalyst for her individual fits and as a continuous source of exacerbation of the condition itself, as each re-staging of these "moral shocks" encodes the memory of the events on a cellular level and ensures its inheritance by the future generations.

In this reading, the mystery of Alesha's exact physical recreation of a fit he has not seen appears much less baffling. The passage emphasizes that "the *exact* same thing that [his father] just described about the *klikusha* now happened to [Alesha]. Alesha suddenly jumped up from behind the table, threw up his arms *exactly* as, according to the story, his mother did, then closed his face with his hands, fell back onto the chair, as if cut down, and thus began to shake all over

[223] *ES*, XIII: 464–68; *BME,* XI: 800–18.

[224] In addition, Dostoevsky's three-year-old son Alesha died of epilepsy (another hereditary disease, closely linked to hysteria at the time) in May of 1878.

in a hysterical fit of sudden, convulsive, and silent tears." While it may be reasonable to assume that Alesha inherited his mother's nervous condition, the text's insistence on the exact reproduction of the actual physical movements during the fit — the wringing of the hands and hiding of the face in particular — cannot be explained fully by that hypothesis alone. The concept of memory encoded on a physiological level, which in turn becomes passed on to subsequent generations in actual traumatic re-animation of specific body parts during "remembrance through illness," however, adds a new dimension to the interpretation of the scene: "the sins of the father" can physically be visited upon the subsequent generations; memory can live on in a family line despite the general amnesia of the past and it can be passed on without the participation of the subsequent generations' consciousness.

If the abused feminine of the present day "traumatic" reading haunts in order to recreate the past, but also to include the possibility of changing the story this time around, the haunting quality of the abused feminine in the nineteenth-century reading functions as a metaphor for the ultimate threat to the family — its eventual failure to reproduce and, ultimately, survive. As we saw in Chapter One, in the European and Russian contexts, both the hysterical and the neurasthenic ends of the shock spectrum assumed forms peculiarly their own, as European and Russian scientists combined theories of shock with those of degeneration.[225] As we already saw, the latter is the pseudo-scientific belief that individuals and humanity at large not only evolved, but also evolutionarily regressed in their development. This process, according to Bénédict Auguste Morel and later, Cesaro Lombroso and Max Nordau, was supposedly responsible for various forms of social deviance, nervous diseases (including hysteria), and mental illness in

[225] Susan K. Morrissey, "The Economy of Nerves: Health, Commercial Culture, and the Self in Late Imperial Russia," *Slavic Review* 69.3 (2010), 645–75; Goering, 23–46.

general, eventually leading to the extinction of the affected family lines and to their elimination from the evolutionary pool.[226]

The terms interchangeably used for Alesha's and his mother's illness — the more common "hysteria" and the less formal "*klikushestvo"* (considered a variant of hysteria at the time) — thus not only both implicitly stress the threat to the survival of the family, but also contain in them the danger for the nation as a whole. As we saw in Chapter One, hysteria by this time had moved away from its original anatomical explanation connected to the Classical meaning of its name — "wandering womb." Instead, it had been re-conceptualized in neuro-biological terms, in large part inspired by the evolution of the neurological sciences and by the growing body of scientific scholarship indicating that both men and children were susceptible to the disease as well. Hysteria was believed to have both hereditary and environmental causes and, both in Europe and Russia, the hereditary model assumed particular importance, as scientists stressed the role of degeneration in the illness. Thus, the environmental, traumatogenic events that may lead to the disease on an individual level inevitably become embedded in a narrative that stresses the fate of the nation as a whole. The disease elicited in a single person therefore becomes forever encoded in a family line, affecting the biological pool of the nation and influencing its future fate.[227]

The less familiar and specifically Russian (peasant) form of hysteria, *klikushestvo,* functions in a similar, albeit somewhat different, manner. In many ways, the condition represents

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[226] For more on degeneration, see Pick; Morel; Lombroso, *The Man of Genius*; Lombrozo, *Bezumie prezhde i teper'*, *Genial'nost' i pomeshatel'stvo,* and *Zhenshchina prestupnitsa i prostitutka*; and Nordau.

[227] Assuming sexual reproduction takes place.

a cite of two contested discourses on hysteria — the scientific discourses of the second half of the nineteenth century, on the one hand, and its medieval, pre-scientific predecessor that saw hysterical symptoms as evidence of possession or as the *stigmata diaboli* (marks of the devil), on the other.[228] With the latter, the hysteric was either viewed with compassion because of her bewitchment by an ill-wisher (more common for the Russian context, than for the European) or reviled because of her "consorting with the devil." These beliefs in the "evil eye" (*porcha*), possession, and bewitchment as primary causes for the disease were still largely prevalent among the peasantry. The scientific community of the time, in turn, viewed *klikushestvo* as a form of hysteria, but one especially predisposed to mass epidemics. The end of the century, for example, saw a number of doctors sent into the villages affected by such epidemics in order to investigate the veracity of the claims of those affected by the illness. While for the peasants themselves, *klikushestvo* was not considered an illness (but a spiritual affliction), the official scientific explanations for the disease ranged from the environmental theory mentioned earlier, malingering, to (eventually) unconscious imitation by those with heightened susceptibility to hypnosis. Similarly to hysteria then, with its long-term implications for the health and wellness of the future generations of the nation, *klikushestvo,* in its potential for "mass hysterical infection," also had wide-ranging implications for the populace as whole.

If we look at the novel through the scientific lens of the 1870s then, biological determinism has the final word, and Alesha, as the inheritor of his family's physiologically

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[228] Micale, 20–21. Specifically on *klikushestvo,* see Pryzhov, "Russkiia klikushi," *Vestnik Evropy* 10 (1868); S. Shteinberg, "Klikushestvo i ego sudebno-meditsinskoe znachenie," *Arkhiv sudebnoi meditsiny i obshchestvennoi gigieny* (1856); Klementovskii, "Klikushi," *Moskovskaia meditsinskaia gazeta* (1860); N.V. Krainskii, *Porcha, klikushi i besnovatye, kak iavleniia russkoi narodnoi zhizni* (Novgorod: Gubernskaia tipografiia, 1900); as well as Christine Worobec's monograph devoted solely to the topic: *Possessed: Women, Witches, and Demons in Imperial Russia* (DeKalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press, 2001).

encoded, unconscious memory is powerless in the face of his and his family's biological destiny. Alesha's symptoms contain a solemn, definitive verdict for the Karamazov family and implicitly for Russia itself: the family eventually will lead to its own elimination from the nation's biological pool, but probably not before their contagious "moral madness" infects others, potentially leading to an epidemic on a national level. Alesha's feminization — both through his hysterical symptoms, careful alignment with his mother, and seeming asexuality — becomes another site of contesting discourses: the feminine as a source of purity, morality, and potential for re-birth, a view traditionally closer to the Russian/Slavic cultural outlook, becomes subverted by the traditionally western medical discourses viewing the feminine as a source of contagion, greater susceptibility to degeneration and illness, and thus a culprit in the eventual dying out of the family line(s).[229]

Healing from Within: Dostoevsky's Views on the Role of Narod *in Russia's Future*

But of course, this would not be a work by Dostoevsky, if biological determinism were allowed the final verdict, thus eliminating free will. For, although engaging eruditely with the cutting edge issues in the mental sciences of the time, Dostoevsky's fiction also deviates sharply from the major conclusions of the more positivistically oriented scientific traditions of his day. As we already saw in Chapter Two, for Dostoevsky, consciousness and the soul are not simply products of the brain and thus subordinate to one's body and biological destiny, as strictly materialist scientific views would have it. Instead, the soul is conceived of as both separate from and superior to the body, and as using the latter as a vehicle to achieve its means, although also

[229] For a discussion of the cultural and scientific differences in views on femininity in Eastern and Western Europe see Julie Vail Brown's "Female Sexuality and Madness in Russian Culture: Traditional Values and Psychiatric Theory," *Social Research* 53.2 (1986), 369–85.

susceptible to physiological influences. This position reinstates the ideas of free will, personal responsibility for one's actions, and possibility of future healing from nervous illness. As we already saw, this view is ultimately incompatible with the purely biological reading of Dostoevsky's work and comes into conflict with the novel's parallel narratives of illness as a possible marker of special destiny, potential redemption, and resurrection. Dostoevsky's representation of transgenerational traumatic haunting is also closely tied to his views on Russian national character and the country's destiny on the world stage, both of which differed significantly from conclusions reached by following assumptions of the mental sciences of the day.

Ultimately, I argue that Dostoevsky's treatment of transgenerational traumatic haunting falls somewhere between the implications of the more benign views on the psyche associated with Romantic psychology and the more modern, psychoanalytically influenced interpretations. Dostoevsky's vision of transgenerational traumatic haunting differs from the late nineteenth-century views on physiologically transmitted memory and psychic inheritance in one crucial way: unlike the latter discourse, which, for the most part, envisions no positive outcome for the Karamazov family and makes little or no room for individual and collective free will, Dostoevsky's vision includes a possibility for a correction of the individual and collective imbalances that led to the "illness" and potential for a positive resolution for the haunting and the threat to the nation as a whole. As numerous scholars have argued in the past, the Russian *narod* ("the common people") is central to Dostoevsky's vision of both Russia's and Europe's future salvation,[230] because the peasantry, in his view, had not been corrupted by the formulaic

[230] See especially Sarah Hudspith's *Dostoevsky and the Idea of Russianness: A New Perspective on Unity and Brotherhood* (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2004), 16–88; as well as Wayne

approaches of the reductively interpreted western sciences and, instinctively, preserved the "image of Christ" within them. Dostoevsky engages with this topic, however, while in a highly self-aware dialog with the biologically deterministic understandings of memory, psychic injury, and familial psychic inheritance of his own time.

Although Dostoevsky's outlook, especially in his later life, at times appears decidedly Slavophile and anti-western in character, it is also strongly influenced by the "native soil" (*pochvennichestvo*) movement that he became involved with in the 1860s, while working at the journal *Vremia* with Nikolai Strakhov, Apollon Grigor'ev, and brother Mikhail. The term derives from the Russian word *pochva,* or "soil." The movement itself was meant to serve as a middle way between Slavophilism and Westernism, and it stressed the need of the *intelligentsia* (the educated Russians) to become reconciled with the common people by "returning to the native soil." By the latter, *pochvenniki* (adherents of the *pochvennichestvo* movement) did not mean a wholesale rejection of western "imported" knowledge and exclusive adherence to native Russian traditions. Instead, they emphasized the fact that both traditions could inform one another, in order to allow Russia to contribute to universal development in its own special way.[231] The *narod's* contribution was seen mainly in terms of its preserved spirituality, whereas western contributions, embraced by the *intelligentsia,* consisted primarily of post–Enlightenment philosophical and scientific developments (introduced to Russia by Peter the Great). By virtue of its preserved spirituality, the Russian *narod* would lead to future regeneration the soon-to-

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Dowler's *Dostoevsky, Grigor'ev, and Native Soil Conservatism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 1–27.

[231] Hudspith, 28.

disintegrate Europe, which is doomed to fall victim to its one-sided embrace of preconceived scientific and philosophical formulae.

Extolling the virtues of the Russian people, however, did not mean a wholesale rejection of western intellectual contributions; instead, it was rather a condemnation of the west's one-sided privileging of formulaic knowledge over spirituality and Orthodoxy specifically. Dostoevsky at one point acknowledges, for example, that he is "a child of his century" and is not willing to reject rational knowledge that originated in the west.[232] Later, in his *Diary,* he also does not deny the benefits of western science and industry and, in the April 1876 issue, argues for the necessity of Peter the Great's reforms and for their (in part) positive effects.[233] In the 1880 issue, he also makes it a point to differentiate spiritual enlightenment from its materialist counterpart (represented primarily by sciences and trades). He expresses gratitude to the west for the latter, but insists on the fact that Russia does not need to import the former.[234]

Whereas the Russian gentry, as Sarah Hudspith points out, is portrayed by Dostoevsky as "running out of fresh energy because, thanks to their separation from their native soil, their range of activity is too limited to take Russia far," the *narod* is designated as carriers of spiritual healing not only for Russia, but the world as a whole.[235] At one point identifying *narod* as both "coarse and ignorant," as "barbarians awaiting the light," Dostoevsky also famously adds in his *Diary* that "One needs to know how to distinguish in the common Russian the beauty from the

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[232] *Pss,* 28.1: 176.

[233] Ibid, 22: 110–11.

[234] Ibid, 26: 150.

[235] Hudspith, 45.

layers of barbarity that have built up. [… He adds:] do not judge the Russian people by the abominations they so often commit, but by those great and sacred things for which, even in the abominations, they constantly yearn."[236]

Dostoevsky explores this special role of the Russian peasantry in the country's national destiny with particular poignancy in the 1873 issues of the *Diary.* In the third issue, for example, he argues that in the *narod* there are great ideas that are fused with the heart and are felt by the people, despite not being expressed consciously; he adds that the whole energy of the common people goes towards trying to bring those latent ideas into conscious existence.[237] In a later issue Dostoevsky elucidates further on the meaning of those "great ideas" by stating that, despite lacking religious education, Russian (peasant) people know Christ "unconsciously" and, not only carry his image in their hearts, but also pass it on to subsequent generations.[238] In addition to the physiological transgenerational transmission of psychic wounds that we have explored in the novel so far then, we also have a parallel transmission of the positive, healing, "unconscious" image of Christ that, if brought into conscious expression, has the power to correct previous wounds and "distortions."

As scholars have repeatedly noted in the past, Alesha's connection to the people is central to the message of possible healing and regeneration in the novel. And now it assumes an added importance in terms of emphasizing his access to a healing source to counter transgenerational transmission of wounds and psychic "distortions." Alesha's ties to *narod* are specifically

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[236] *Pss,* 22: 43.

[237] Ibid, 21: 17.

[238] Ibid, 38.

signaled in the work through his inheritance of his mother's *klikushestvo* (an illness associated specifically with *peasant* women), his connection to his spiritual teacher Zosima (who ministers to the common people and is renowned for helping with their suffering), and through inverted mirroring of his memories of Sof'ia Ivanovna by the female pilgrims who come to see Zosima in the section "Peasant Women Who Have Faith" ("*Veruiushchiie baby*"). In the latter section, we see Zosima minister to the pilgrims, who come to him with concerns ranging from inability to get over grief due to a young son's death, fits associated with *klikushestvo,* as well as the need for absolution for (presumably) killing an abusive husband.

The scene illustrates well Dostoevsky's earlier pronouncement about the "darkness" and "barbarity" of the Russian people and their simultaneous unconscious drive to manifest the image of Christ from within. We see, for example, the violence and the "spiritual distortions" of the *narod* in the recounting of the abusive actions of one of the women's husbands and in that same woman's implied later murder of him. Although the scene is dominated by the women's suffering and need for help, however, it closes on a hopeful note: one of Zosima's previous visitors comes back to check on his health and, unbidden, donates some money to be given to a woman who might need it more than she does. Thus, the scene counters the narrative about the "biological liability" of women and peasants for the health of the country as a whole. Whereas the dominant narrative in the mental sciences of the time casts women's and peasants' nervous problems specifically in light of their increased biological susceptibility to mental illness, as well as their greater degeneration and weaker wills, the scene instead presents peasant women as suffering nervous problems due to disproportionately greater experience of suffering. Furthermore, despite (and perhaps in part because) of that suffering, women eventually come closer to manifesting the image of Christ from within through selfless care for others.

Dostoevsky vividly portrays this great, often unwitnessed, suffering in the narrator's discussion of *klikushestvo* in the same section. The narrator inserts a rare autobiographical aside, sharing:

> […] in my childhood I often happened to see and hear these *klikushi* [plurals of *klikusha*] in the villages and monasteries. They used to be brought to mass; they would shriek and bark like a dog so that they were heard all over the church. But when the sacrament was carried in and they were led up to it, at once the "possession" ceased, and the sick women were always soothed for a time. As a child, I was stunned and amazed at this. Around the same time, however, I heard from country landowners and especially from my teachers in the city that the whole illness was nothing but malingering in order to avoid work, and that it could always be uprooted through proper severity […]. But later on I learned with astonishment from medical specialists that there is no pretence about it, that it is a terrible women's illness, which is especially prevalent among us in Russia, and which testifies to the hard lot of the village women. It is a disease, I was told, arising from exhausting physical work too soon after hard, abnormal labour in childbirth that lacks any medical assistance, and from grief that has no outlet [*ot bezvykhodnogo goria*], from beatings, and so on, which some women are not able to endure, despite the general example of others.[239]

[239] Ibid, 14: 24. "[…] в детстве моем мне часто случалось в деревнях и по монастырям видеть и слышать этих кликуш. Их приводили к обедне, они визжали или лаяли по-собачьи на всю церковь, но когда выносили дары и их подводили к дарам, тотчас 'беснование' прекращалось, и больные на несколько времени всегда успокоивались. Меня ребенка очень это поражало и удивляло. Но тогда же я услышал от иных помещиков и

The passage connects individual and familial suffering, as well as the resultant illness (experienced by Sof'ia Ivanovna and inherited by Alesha), to a widely spread social problem. Sofia Ivanovna's terrifying symptoms, which we witnessed through Alesha's vivid three-year-old memory earlier, are now recreated for us through the narrator's descriptions of the "shrieking" and "barking" he "often encountered" in various villages and monasteries. We now realize that the heart-wrenching "grief without outlet" that was so difficult to comprehend in our introduction to Sof'ia Ivanovna is an epidemic in the villages. The narrator not only tells us that the *klikushi* are not uncommon (he witnessed them "often"), but that these women represent only a small portion of those that are undergoing immense suffering at the root of the disease's cause. The reference to "the general example of others" tells us that it is more of a rule, rather than an exception, for peasant women to suffer from medically unattended childbirth, beatings, and "grief without outlet." Most women bear it, and only a small portion becomes fully symptomatic; the fact that this "small portion" is so great in number, however, is itself indicative of the wide scope of the problem.

The narrator's aside also touches on the same collective blindness to suffering that we saw with Sof'ia Ivanovna's circumstances earlier, which, in her case, also resulted in pathological collective amnesia of her unwitnessed plight and contributed to her subsequent "haunting" returns. The passage portrays a class rift, vividly conveying the gentry's and *intelligentsia's*

особенно от городских учителей моих, на мои расспросы, что это все притворство, чтобы не работать, и что это всегда можно искоренить надлежащею строгостью […]. Но впоследствии я с удивлением узнал от специалистов-медиков, что тут никакого нет притворства, что это страшная женская болезнь, и кажется по преимуществу у нас на Руси, свидетельствующая о тяжелой судьбе нашей сельской женщины, болезнь, происходящая от изнурительных работ слишком вскоре после тяжелых, неправильных, безо всякой медицинской помощи родов; кроме того от безвыходного горя, от побоев и пр., чего иные женские натуры выносить по общему примеру все-таки не могут."

separation from the people. The narrator informs us that both landowners and his "city teachers" dismissed *klikushestvo* as malingering that could be corrected through "severity." Instead of witnessing the underlying "grief without outlet" at the root of the problem, the gentry and city *intelligentsia* (represented here by teachers) dismiss and in fact exacerbate it by suggesting further harsh treatment, thus ensuring the future perpetuity of the illness. Thus, even the non-verbal, bodily testimony of *narod* is left unwitnessed. Interestingly, in line with *pochvennichestvo's* tenets, the medical experts play a positive role here, helping in part to bridge the rift between the upper and lower classes. Whereas the gentry and *intelligentsia* contribute to the continuation of suffering, remaining separate from the people, the medical experts witness the illness by confirming its validity and help the narrator (who is also not of the people) to become closer with *narod.*

As the narrator continues with his aside, he provides an explanation of the immediate, albeit temporary, healing that *klikushi* experience upon bowing to the sacraments. The narrator informs us that this temporary healing happens:

> probably in the most natural of ways. Both the peasant women who supported her [the *klikusha*] and, most importantly, the sick woman herself fully believed, as if it were a well established truth, that the unclean spirit that took possession of her could never stand it if the sick woman were brought to the sacrament and made to bow down before it. And that is why it always happened (and should have always happened) that, unavoidably, a sort of convulsion of the whole organism took place with the nervously, and surely also psychically, ill woman at the moment of bowing down to the sacrament, brought forth by the expectation of the miracle of

healing and by the fullest of faith that it would come to pass; and it did come to pass, if only for a minute.[240]

The central focus of this temporary healing scenario is a community of strong believers, whose faith brings about the desired physical relief. The narrator privileges this "healing from within" by calling it "the most natural of ways." In the passage the specificity of peasant beliefs (in this case, in demon possession) is largely overlooked, with primary focus instead given to the strength of their faith and the fact that it is shared and upheld by the supporting community. The passage states, for example, that both components — the faith of the community and of the woman herself — are necessary for the temporary healing; the latter, however, is privileged, as we are told that it is "most important." This healing scene stands in stark contrast to Sof'ia Ivanovna's fit in front of the icon in Alesha's memory. The holy image is there, but the woman is bereft of a supportive community of believers in this moment; thus, the temporary healing does not come.

Furthermore, in the passage, the narrator once again breaks down the strict materialist assumptions of the mental sciences. He emphasizes the fact that the woman is not only "nervously" sick, but "surely is also psychically ill." The illness is thus located not only in the body, but in the mind as well. As in Chapter Two, we see the disavowal of the materialist claims that only the body affects the mind, but not the other way around. We are shown that, by virtue

[240] *Pss,* 14: 24. “происходило вероятно тоже самым натуральным образом, и подводившие ее к дарам бабы, а главное, и сама больная, вполне веровали, как установившейся истине, что нечистый дух, овладевший больною, никогда не может вынести, если ее, больную, подведя к дарам, наклонят пред ними. А потому и всегда происходило (и должно было происходить) в нервной и конечно тоже психически больной женщине непременное как бы сотрясение всего организма ее в момент преклонения пред дарами, сотрясение, вызванное ожиданием непременного чуда исцеления и самою полною верой в то, что оно совершится. И оно совершалось хотя бы только на одну минуту.”

of belief alone, the woman (with the help of her community) in fact affects her body, bringing about a "nervous convulsion" that at last provides her with temporary release from her grief and suffering, which previously lacked outlet. We are also told that because of the "fullest faith" of the woman and the community, the convulsion is "unavoidable," which resonates with the narrator's earlier statement in the passage that this "always happens" and in fact "always should happen." The emphasis underscores the direct connection between certainty of belief and the inevitability of that belief's effects on the body.

Thus, we see that Alesha is connected with the people and their healing faith not only through his silent presence during the scene with Zosima and his pilgrims, but through the workings of his illness as well. That connection becomes further strengthened by the inverted mirroring of Alesha's own memories in the remembrances of the pilgrims. One of the most touching scenes in this section is the sharing of an inconsolable mother, who just lost her three-year-old son, her last remaining child. Sobbing, the woman tells Zosima that she cannot forget her son and cannot go on with her everyday life. She aurally recreates the sound of his footsteps and his voice for Zosima, saying that she keeps hearing them. She takes out his belt and cries over it. As Thompson points out, the scene briefly resurrects the three-year-old child. Since his name is Alexei (Alesha), she notes, the scene also briefly resurrects our protagonist, who was about the same age as the dead child when he lost his mother.[241]

The scene thus both inverts and mirrors Alesha's three-year-old memory of his mother, as well as his hauntedness by her figure. Whereas in one case, as Thompson points out, we have a son who lost a mother, in another we have a mother who cannot get over losing her son. The

[241] Thompson, 92. The dead child is also the same age and has the same name as Dostoevsky's son, who died of epilepsy in 1878.

woman tells Zosima "I can't forget him [son]. It's just as if he is standing right here in front of me, he doesn't go away," echoing Alesha's own words about remembering his mother, "just as if she is standing before me alive." As Thompson notes, the encounter between Zosima and the pilgrims thus serves as a scene of a double resurrection: of Alesha's mother (mirrored in the *klikushas*) and of the young Alesha himself.[242]

Although Thompson points out that the pilgrim mother's memory of her son mirrors Alesha's three-year-old memory of his mother, another crucial instance of such mirroring is overlooked. The encounter between Zosima and the peasant women re-creates not only the inverted version of Alesha's *visual* memory, but his *bodily* remembrance of his mother as well. Earlier in the scene, when the narrator describes the fits of one of the *klikushas* brought to Zosima, he states that she began "shrieking, absurdly hiccuping, and shook all over as if experiencing *rodimets* [*kak budto v rodimtse*]." The full meaning of the emphasized phrase is lost in translation (and sometimes mistranslation). Constance Garnett, for example, translated it incorrectly as "as if in childbirth."[243] Richard Pevear and Larisa Volokhonsky's version comes closer to the phrase's true meaning, rendered as "as if in convulsions."[244] The actual meaning of the colloquial word *rodimets* is the same as that of *rodimchik,* referring to a name of an illness that is accompanied by fits, convulsions, and loss of consciousness, but specifically in very

[242] Ibid, 91–92.

[243] Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov,* trans. Constance Garnett (New York: Random House, 1995), 48.

[244] Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov,* trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky, 48.

young children.[245] Thus, we not only see Alesha's connection with *narod* through his three-year-old visual memory, but through his bodily remembrance of his mother as well. Whereas in one case we have a son (Alesha) remembering his mother bodily by recreating both her fit and its accompanying movements with point-by-point exactitude, in the other case we have a woman (presumably a mother) experiencing a fit that is described in terms of a convulsive illness reserved exclusively for very young children.

To sum up, the reading of this section reveals that Dostoevsky does not dismiss the relevance of scientific knowledge to Russia's national destiny altogether, but instead dismisses its assumptions of determinism and one-sided emphasis over Orthodox spirituality. Dangers to the nervous health of the people, stemming from the effects of long-term, accrued "environmental" and "moral shocks," do exist, and the resultant encoded distortions indeed have the potential to be passed down to subsequent generations. According to Dostoevsky, however, Russia possesses a potential "antidote" unavailable to the rest of the world. This special source of healing stems from the psychic effects of the people's preserved faith, which in turn is capable of affecting changes in the body. Although this preserved "image of Christ" within can bring about momentary relief for the people, it is brief and can come about only through communal exercise of faith. Thus, Russia's internal division between the peasantry and the *intelligentsia* must be eliminated before widely spread healing can be available for the country as a whole. Alesha's explicit connection with the peasantry (while himself not of their class) singles him out as a recipient of a parallel transgenerational transmission: both of physiologically encoded psychic

[245] Tat'iana Efremova, *Novyi slovar' russkogo iazyka: Tolkovo-slovoobrazovatel'nyi* (Moscow: Russkii iazyk, 2000), accessed July 1, 2015, http://slovar.cc/rus/efremova-slovo/1168744.html. The closest equivalent to the disease I have located in English is "febrile seizures," but direct correspondence is uncertain.

wounds and of the spiritual source of healing from the Russian people. In order to take a closer look at this parallel transmission and its implications, we must once again return to the scene of Alesha's fit.

On Channeling the Past and Parallel Transmission: Alesha's "Possession"

Unlike the memory scene with the icon of the Mother of God, Alesha's fit cannot be accurately described as an unprocessed personal traumatic experience or an unfinished process of mourning, as classical Freudian or Caruthian theories would have it. Alesha does seem to experience underlying traumatic mechanisms of literal psychic return and re-enactment, but with one major exception: he channels the memory of someone else, not his own. The fit therefore functions more as an intergenerational possession by another family member's traumatic past. Ultimately, Alesha's experience is more akin to what Freudian psychoanalyst Nicolas Abraham terms as "the phantom," which he defines as "a haunting psychological phenomenon that is meant to objectify, even if under the guise of individual or collective hallucinations, the gap produced in us by the concealment of some part of a love object's life [... and] is therefore also a metapsychological fact," adding that "what haunts are not the dead, but the gaps left within us by the secrets of others."[246]

Whereas Abraham's "phantom" is passed on through the psyche, however, Dostoevsky's resides primarily in the body, yet functions in much the same way: witnessing the dis-owned suffering associated with the specter's past creates the possibility for the release by the ghost and leads to a cessation of an escalation of its haunting, as well as a possible resolution. This witnessing entails co-feeling and co-suffering with, as well as gaining conscious access to

[246] Abraham and Torok, 171.

compassion and mercy for, the victim, manifesting those potentialities from within. This process resonates strongly with the workings of the conscious manifestation of the preserved image of Christ within the Russian people. Also, curiously, this model of transgenerational haunting simultaneously reaches into the past and partially foresees the future in terms of its theoretical grounding. The more physiologized version of Abraham's "phantom," for example, also shares roots with the romantic psychology of C.G. Carus, whose work and its deeps impression on Dostoevsky we encountered briefly in Chapter Two.[247] As we already saw, Carus viewed all illness as an expression of an underlying spiritual, psychic imbalance or distortion, located in his version of the unconscious. Carus envisioned a much more benign unconscious than his later nineteenth-century colleagues. Although nervous and other physical illnesses become expressed through the body, one always has access to healing through acknowledging and removing imbalances in one's unconscious. Carus disagrees with those that view the unconscious as degrading and do not acknowledge its "inner wisdom and beauty"; instead, he sees it as a "positive force, which must be safeguarded, fostered, and obeyed."[248] When interpreted broadly, this more Romantic (in Carus's case, in part Schellengian) view of the unconscious as an "inner guide" and the "source of latent inner truth and wisdom" that are always available to the individual for outward manifestation, is not necessarily in conflict with Dostoevsky's view on the inner spiritual wisdom of *narod,* functioning in a similar way.

Ultimately, by designating Alesha as an inheritor of his family's shameful, unjust suffering that has not been properly witnessed and laid to rest, and by having him on some level

[247] Specifically on C.G. Carus and Dostoevsky's fiction, see: Smith and Isotoff. This piece also draws a connection between Carus's and Freud's work. Also, see Gibian.

[248] Gibian, 373.

assume the responsibility for it, Dostoevsky indicates that Alesha bears a special purpose and destiny that he himself is not consciously aware of yet, but which nonetheless already controls his actions in the present. Alesha acts as an unknowing host for the phantom of his family's un-owned, un-witnessed secrets, and there is a strong sense in the work that his rebirth, symbolic "return to the soil," and the newly found resolution after the vision of the Cana of Galilee would in part be connected to dealing with his family's dark legacy.

Whereas the biologically deterministic beliefs dominant in the mental sciences in the second half of the nineteenth century would read Alesha Karamazov as a hysterically ill victim of degeneration destined to succumb to his biology, the novel itself contests this interpretation, while engaging with the scientific discourses of its time. Putting both pre–Freudian and post–Freudian views on psychic injury, memory, and familial inheritance into conversation is therefore necessary for a more nuanced understanding of the novel's engagement with these issues. Ultimately, the novel suggests a more hopeful future both for the protagonist himself and for the potential redemption and continuation of the family line as a whole. The two-directional interpretive move of engaging both the nineteenth-century scholarship on trauma-like psychic wounding and present-day trauma theory, in turn, accomplishes two things. On the one hand, it highlights an important underlying difference in the views on trauma in the two discourses: whereas present day trauma scholarship privileges narrative and eventual participation of consciousness in traumatization and eventual healing, the late nineteenth century makes provisions for a *physical* traumatic experience, which still leads to a literal re-creation and return of the past event(s), yet does not need to include the participation of consciousness. Ultimately, this difference provides a less restrictive view of trauma, accounting for traumatic experiences currently not accommodated by the dominant trauma paradigm. Both the pre– and the post–

Freudian readings, in turn, create an interpretive tension that cannot be resolved by simply adopting one reading over the other. Instead, the two readings demonstrate the complexity of Dostoevsky's work, as it simultaneously engages with the scientific discourses of his own time, while also drawing on the scientific discourses of the past and in part foreseeing those of the future.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE HERO WITH CRACKED SPINE:

NEURASTHENIA AND CHEKHOV'S *IVANOV*

> "However valuable what has been acquired by scientific methods and however wonderful the future which the proponents of experimental psychology promise, still, because the activity of mind has an exceptionally subjective character, without intuitive understanding much will remain unclear. That is why literature and art will always supply us psychiatrists with valuable material."[249]

> "That, aside from benefit, civilization has also brought terrible harm to humanity as well, no one doubts. Medical men in particular, insist on this fact, as they, not without reason, see in progress the cause of nervous diseases, which are so often observed in the last decades. In Europe and America, at every turn, you will see all types of nervous conditions, beginning

[249] M.O. Shaikevich, "Psikhologicheskie cherty geroev Maksima Gor'kogo," *Vestnik psikhologii* 1 (1904): 55. Quoted in Sirotkina, *Diagnosing Literary Genius,* 4.

with simple neuralgia and ending with severe psychosis. I, myself, had occasion to observe cases of severe psychosis, the causes of which should be looked for only in civilization."[250]

In the previous chapter, we focused primarily on physiologically transmitted illness — hysteria — that in turn affected subsequent generations. Although the disease originated in part due to external "moral shocks," the primary source of anxiety it elicited concerned issues of heredity, or external manifestation of internally "encoded" pathology. In this chapter, we move on to the neurasthenic end of the shock spectrum and investigate the literary representations of the so-called "Nervous Age," theorizations of which were so popular at fin-de-siècle. Previous anxieties about external manifestations of physiologically transmitted pathology now become upstaged by concerns surrounding the effects of overwhelming environmental stimuli on the individual's (and by extension the nation's) finite availability of nervous energy.

Because by this time individual nervous cells were believed to be endowed with a form of consciousness, thus reflecting one's mental and emotional states, external stimuli came to be seen as having a direct influence on one's nervous system and on the amount of nervous energy

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[250] Chekhov, "A Case of *Mania Grandiosa,"* in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem v tridtsati tomakh, Vol. 2,* 21. This is an early humorous work of fiction, and the words in the epigraph are spoken by a fictional narrator (not Chekhov himself). Henceforth, all references from this volume will be listed by the abbreviation *"Pss,"* followed by volume and page numbers (for example, for this citation: *Pss,* 2:21). Original: "Что цивилизация, помимо пользы, принесла человечеству и страшный вред, никто не станет сомневаться. Особенно настаивают на этом медики, не без основания видящие в прогрессе причину нервных расстройств, так часто наблюдаемых в последние десятки лет. В Америке и Европе на каждом шагу вы встретите все виды нервных страданий, начиная с простой невралгии и кончая тяжелым психозом. Мне самому приходилось наблюдать случаи тяжелого психоза, причины которого нужно искать только в цивилизации."

one must expand. As we saw in Chapter One, concerns over "nervous depletion" reached their peak with the introduction and growing popularity of the diagnosis of neurasthenia, "discovered" by the American neuropathologist George Beard in the 1860s and popularized in Russia in the 1880s. We will see in this chapter, however, that, as the list of neurasthenia's symptoms and causes grew increasingly lengthy and heterogeneous in nature, with the threat of externally imposed nervous pathology supposedly omnipresent, the condition and its diagnostic criteria became increasingly generalized and less meaningful. Neurasthenia's sensational popularity, however, ensured its entry into popular social debates, as well as its appropriation by the literary discourses of the time. Earlier theories of environmental *social* determinism now curiously combined with those of *biological* determinism, with Russia's social and psychological ills now being discussed in the two discourses — the literary and the scientific — with a new sense of competition and mutual resonance.

As we already saw briefly in Chapter One, these conceptual evolutions in the sciences were taking place in the context of the general explosion of interest in the psychological life of man in the second half of the nineteenth century, in both Russia and Western Europe. By the time we get to the 1880s, two dominant discourses led the investigations into the human psyche and often competed with one another in the cultural sphere: the newly professionalizing sciences of the mind (psychiatry, neurology, psychology, etc.) and the psychological fiction of the Russian Golden Age.[251] Both discourses claimed special knowledge of the human mind and constructed overarching claims as to what constituted psychic and moral health of individuals and extended those claims to the health and future survival of nations. As both a practicing physician and the last lauded representative of the Golden Age of Russian literature, Anton

[251] Sirotkina, *Diagnosing Literary Genius,* 1–14.

Chekhov thus provides a fascinating insight into the close relationship between science and literature around fin-de-siècle.

Chekhov's fiction engages with numerous nervous disorders on the-called shock spectrum: with melancholia, megalomania, paranoia, and hysteria, to name but a few. His exploration of the relatively new and fashionable neurasthenia in his early drama *Ivanov,* however, which came out in 1887 and was substantially revised in 1889, brings to the forefront with particular clarity the struggle between the Russian scientific and literary discourses for the authority over the Russian psychic and nervous health. I argue that this early work not only poignantly dramatizes this competition, but also ultimately demonstrates its potentially dangerous nature. Neither discourse in the play is adequate for understanding and explaining Ivanov's state of mind, with characters who draw on various literary and scientific models continually failing to understand him and finally contributing to the violent death of this object of their gaze. Ultimately, Chekhov creates a new Russian cultural type that combines the "superfluous man" of the literary discourse with the scientific (and by this time popular) figure of the neurasthenic. In combining these types, however, Chekhov criticizes the limitations of both and ultimately transcends those well-worn tropes.

More importantly, Chekhov highlights the problematic overgeneralization of neurasthenia by this time and the dangerous fascination with the disease in the literary, scientific, and popular imaginations. Ultimately, I argue that *Ivanov* not only dramatizes the struggle for authority between the literary and the scientific discourses, with the title character claimed as a familiar type by both, but also demonstrates the simultaneous mutual (and at times dangerous) reliance of the two discourses on one another. As we will see later, literary tropes (like those of

the “superfluous man”) made way for the popularity and acceptance of medical theories (like neurasthenia) and became superimposed on them. At the same time, however, those medical theories were fed back into the literary discourse and were appropriated by it later in the century. The play dramatizes the dangers of this repeating mutual self-referentiality that draws heavily on social and biological determinism, disavowing individual agency and free will.

Literature and Sciences of the Mind in Late Nineteenth-Century Russia

As we saw briefly in Chapter One, nineteenth-century developments in Russia's scientific and literary production were mutually dependent on one another, with both, in turn, strongly connected to Russia's nineteenth-century quest to explain the human soul and to find a new morality for the country. Russia, more so than any other European country, demonstrates the fallacy of previous scholarly assumptions about the relationship between science and literature in the nineteenth century. The Russian case challenges past assumptions about the active scientific production of knowledge and literature's supposedly passive response of incorporation and further engagement with already established scientific theories. Instead, we see that both literature and the sciences were part of a greater, more inclusive intellectual milieu, with contributions by both influencing one another and with literature at times even making way for future scientific explorations.[252]

The split between the literary and scientific discourses in late nineteenth-century Russian culture, with both vying for authority to "diagnose" and prescribe cures for social and individual ills, traditionally afforded a privileged place for literature. The often cited passage by the author

[252] See Beer, 1–23 or Levine, 1–24, for example. Also, see Sirotkina, *Diagnosing Literary Genius,* 8–9.

and social reformer Nikolai Chernyshevskii, for example, captures the gravity of the social mission that, in his eyes, in the 1850s and 1860s, was exclusively entrusted to the care of the nineteenth-century Russian author:

> In countries where intellectual and social life has attained high level of development, there exists, if one may say so, a division of labor among the various branches of intellectual activity, of which we know only one — literature. For this reason, no matter how we rate our literature compared to foreign literatures, still in our intellectual movement it plays a much greater role than does French, German or English literature in the intellectual movement of their countries, and there rests on it a heavier responsibility than on any of the others. […] That which Dickens says in England is also said, apart from him and the other novelists, by philosophers, jurists, publicists, economists, etc., etc. With us, apart from the novelists, no one talks about subjects which comprise the subject of their stories. For that reason, even if Dickens need not feel it incumbent upon him, as a novelist, to bear direct responsibility for serving as spokesman for the strivings of his age, in so far as these can find expression in fields other than belles lettres, in Russia the novelist cannot have recourse to such justification.[253]

Chernyshevsky's words echo the general intellectual sentiments of the time and underscore the special mission of the Russian author and of the literary critic in the 1850s and 1860s. In this view, the Russian writer takes on a prophetic role with the responsibility of foreseeing the country's possible futures, as well as reflecting to the public the present reality; he

[253] Chernyshevsky, quoted in Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Old Regime* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974), 278–79.

becomes the Truth bearer, the voice of dissent, who must speak out no matter the cost. Discussing "the strivings of his age," Chernyshevskii argues, is a moral responsibility on the part of the author, because, if he does not do it, no one else will.

And yet, although Chernyshevsky would have us believe that the role of the literary author as the voice of conscience, the vehicle for social change, and the authority on individual and national moral health was successfully rivaled by none, by the time we get to the 1880s, the professionalizing scientists of the mind would certainly have disagreed. As we have been seeing, nineteenth-century mental scientists were building on the impressive rapid developments in the conceptualizations of the nervous system and were increasingly re-interpreting the human psychic and emotional experiences in physiological terms, often threatening the very existence of the concept of the soul.

As we saw in Chapter One, starting with the eighteenth century, conceptualizations of the nervous system begin to transition from a hydraulic, humoral based model, with its primary center in the brain, to an electrical model that grew increasingly more independent from the brain, with nerves as consumers of power subject to the exhaustion and dissolution principle found in physics. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the nervous system is also no longer thought to have a single center, instead being comprised of multiple points of origin. It possessed its own system of communication that did not necessarily depend on the brain, but did require external stimuli in order to function properly and ultimately — survive.[254]

One of the most striking shifts in theorizations of the nervous system, and one particularly important for conceptualizations of nervous pathology, was the move to localize a

[254] Salisbury and Shail, 1–40.

form of consciousness in individual nerve cells, which led late nineteenth-century neurology to view nerves as "reflections of mental states."[255] As a result, a curious partial reversal of an otherwise overwhelming trend of physiologization takes place. Although the second half of the nineteenth century is defined by the overwhelming tendency to view nervous illness as a manifestation of "faulty" heredity, another source of pathology becomes introduced as well. As we draw closer to fin-de-siècle, nervous disease becomes no longer seen as resulting from internal physiological pathology alone, but eventually becomes viewed as an ever-present threat stemming from over-exhaustion, nervous strain, and insufficient nourishment of the nervous system as well. Thus, nervous disorders could now result from relatively small psychological changes.[256] The latter, combined with the economic bodily conceptualization of the nervous system as a network with finite energy susceptible to the danger of eventual depletion, led to the assumption that the threat of psychic injury or nervous illness was omnipresent and could happen at any time.[257]

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[256] This conceptual move also in part lays the ground for future "psychical" interpretations of mental pathology, most notably psychoanalysis.

[257] For primary sources in addition to those I discuss in Chapter One, see the so-called "Kovalevskii Archive," an informal name for one of the main repositories for research on neurasthenia in 1880s and '90s, organized (and named after) Pavel Kovalevskii, most known for founding the journal *Arkhiv psikhiatrii, neirologii i sudebnoi psikhopatologii* and for organizing the psychiatry department at the University of Khar'kov. See especially Kovalevskii's "Folie du doute," *Arkhiv psikhiatrii, neirologii i sudebnoi psikhopatologii* 8 (1886), 36–57 and *Obshchaia psikhopatologiia* (Khar'kov: Redaktsiia zhurnala *Arkhiv psikhiatrii, neirologii i sudebnoi psikhopatologii,* 1886). The first National Congress of Russian Psychiatrists, which took place in 1887, included many discussions of neurasthenia; see especially I.P. Merzheevskii, "Ob usloviiakh, blagopriiatstvuiushchikh razvitiiu dushevnykh i nervnykh boleznei v Rossii i o merakh, napravlennykh k ikh umen'sheniiu" and I.A. Sikorskii, "Zadachi nervno-psikhicheskoi gigieny i profilaktiki," both in *Trudy pervogo s"ezda otechestvennykh psikhiatrov* (St. Petersburg, 1887). In addition, for secondary sources, see Morrissey, 645–75; Jacqueline Lee Friedlander, "Psychiatrists and Crisis in Russia, 1880–1917" (PhD diss., University of California,

This radical reinterpretation of the human psychic experience by the scientists of the mind took place in the context of their rapid professionalization, with the scientific community relying on multiple professional journals, conferences, university departments, and organizations for their collaboration. As Irina Sirotkina and Angela Brintlinger point out, writing was central to this bid for authority, as scientists of the mind both aligned themselves with the efforts of literary criticism through endeavours like writing pathographies, for example, and, simultaneously, challenged the literary authority by often insisting on the superiority of their own interpretations of the human psychic experience.[258]

What often receives much less attention, however, is the extent to which the two discourses not only competed with each other, but also relied on and validated one another, each making way for the acceptance of key assertions in the competing discourse and appropriating claims and metaphors from each other as well. As Alex Kozulin points out in his study on the humanistic tradition in Russian psychology, for example, the country had a long-standing tradition of drawing on literary characters, as opposed to clinical case studies, for arriving at conclusions about the psychological characteristics of the various classes of the Russian

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Berkley, 2007); and Goering, 23–46. For secondary sources on European discussions, see Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra and Roy Porter, eds., *Cultures of Neurasthenia from Beard to the First World War* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001); Anson Rabinbach, *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue, and the Origins of Modernity* (New York: Basic Books, 1990); Killen; and Michael J. Cowan, *Cult of the Will: Nervousness and German Modernity* (University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008); among others.

[258] Sirotkina, *Diagnosing Literary Genius,* 1–14; Angela Brintlinger, "Writing about Madness: Russian Attitudes toward Psyche and Psychiatry, 1887–1907," in Angela Brintlinger and Ilya Vinitsky, eds., *Madness and the Mad in Russian Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 173–75.

society.[259] Similarly, Pavel Annenkov wrote in 1858 that "society even thinks in terms of literary types, so that an image beloved by the public can serve as a barometer that allows us easily to gauge the state of mind of many thousands of people."[260]

In her study on neurasthenia in Russia, in turn, Laura Goering argues that this scientific construct was no exception to the general tendencies described above, asserting that one of the reasons the illness became so popular in the Russian popular imagination was its similarity to the mental state of the literary type of the "superfluous man." Although the literary type and the illness did not match up exactly in terms of symptoms, the former, according to Goering, nonetheless influenced the theoretical shape neurasthenia eventually took in the Russian medical discourse. Both the literary and the scientific constructs, in turn, became conflated in the popular imagination.[261] Whereas literary tradition both influenced the diagnostic evolution of neurasthenia and paved the way for its popularization, however, by the late 1880s we see the reversal of that movement, as the now sensationally popular illness in turn influences literature and becomes appropriated by it as a cultural metaphor.

Between a "Wife" and a "Mistress": Chekhov as Doctor and Author

So, how did Chekhov, as both a scientist and a literary author, negotiate his identification with these competing discourses? "Medicine is my legal wife, literature my mistress," Chekhov famously wrote, adding "When I'm bored with one, I spend the night with the other. This is

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[259] Alex Kozulin, "Life as Authoring: The Humanistic Tradition in Russian Psychology," *New Ideas in Psychology* 9:3 (1991), 337.

[260] Pavel Annenkov, "Literaturnyi tip slabogo cheloveka," in *Vospominaniia i kriticheskie ocherki, 1849–1868* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia M. Stasiulevicha, 1879), 153.
[261] Goering, 41–42.

irregular, but at least not monotonous and neither suffers from my infidelity."[262] Indeed, as multiple scholars have pointed out, Chekhov's identities as both a doctor and a literary author were inseparable and informed one another. As a practicing physician, Chekhov kept up with the major medical developments of his time and subscribed to the leading scientific and medical publications, like the journal *Vrach* (*The Physician*). As a young doctor, he envisioned working with his brother Aleksandr on an ambitious scientific work, titled *The History of Sexual Authority from the Point of View of Natural Sciences* and collected materials towards a dissertation project titled *A History of Medicine in Russia*. He also hoped to transform his work *Sakhalin Island* into a doctoral dissertation, which would have qualified him for a faculty position and allowed him to lecture medical students on empathic treatment of patients. Chekhov battled a cholera outbreak as a *zemstvo* doctor, petitioned tirelessly to raise funds in order to save a surgical journal, as well as dispensing free medical advice to countless family members and friends.[263]

Chekhov's insistence that literature should not be divorced from science even led him to criticize strongly his one-time literary idol Lev (who, for his own part, according to Gor'kii, insisted that "Medicine stands in [Chekhov's] way. He would be a much finer writer if he hadn't

[262] *Pss (Letters),* 2: 326–27. Letter to A.S. Suvorin (11 Sept. 1888). Original: "Медицина — моя законная жена, а литература — любовница. Когда надоедает одна, я ночую у другой. Это хотя и беспорядочно, но зато не так скучно, да и к тому же от моего вероломства обе решительно ничего не теряют."

[263] For this and other biographical information on Chekhov, specifically pertaining to his professional identity as a doctor, see Vasilii V. Khizhniakov, *Anton Pavlovich Chekhov kak vrach* (Moscow: Medgiz, 1947); Isai M. Geizer, *Chekhov i meditsina* (Moscow: Medgiz, 1954); E. Meve, *Meditsina v tvorchestve i zhizni A.P. Chekhova* (Kiev: Zdorov'ia, 1989); John Coope, *Doctor Chekhov: A Study in Literature and Medicine* (Chale: Cross, 1997); M. Mirskii, *Doktor Chekhov* (Moscow: Nauka, 2003); among others.

been a doctor").[264] In response to the scientific inadequacies in Tolstoy's *Kreutzer Sonata* (1889), for example, Chekhov wrote:

> […] the boldness with which he treats topics he doesn't understand and, out of stubbornness, doesn't wish to understand. So, for example, his opinions about syphilis, foundling homes, women's revulsion for sexual intercourse and so on are not merely disputable, but they unmask an ignorant man who hasn't taken the trouble in the course of his long life to read two or three books written by specialists.[265]

By contrast, Chekhov's training and experience as a doctor, not only served as a source of inspiration for engaging, yet realistic plots, but also informed his approach to the portrayal of his literary characters. As a student and a great admirer of the professor of general medicine G.A. Zakhar'in, Chekhov adopted the latter's insistence that every medical case should be approached on an individualized basis and should take into account each patient's peculiarities and special needs. Chekhov subsequently brought this view not only to his medical practice, but to the creation of his literary characters' inner worlds as well.

Not surprisingly, Chekhov also took an active interest in the mental sciences of his day. Remembering his conversations with Chekhov at the end of 1893, for example, Ieronim Iasinskii, reported the author saying that he was "highly interested in all kinds of deviations of the so-called soul. If I [Chekhov] hadn't become a writer, I probably would have become a

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[264] S.P. Bychkov, *L.N. Tolstoi v russkoi kritike: Sbornik statei* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1952), 488.

[265] Ibid, 605–606.

psychiatrist."[266] In similar vein, Tat'iana Shchepkina-Kupernik wrote that Chekhov advised her multiple times: "If you want to become a writer […] study psychiatry. It's absolutely necessary."[267]

Furthermore, as a student at the Medical School at Moscow University, Chekhov studied with A. Ia. Kozhevnikov, the father of Russian neuropathology and the founder of the Moscow Society of Neuropathologists and Psychiatrists (in 1890). Chekhov communicated with the famous zemstvo doctor Pavel A. Arkhangel'skii, reading and commenting on the manuscript of his report in 1887 on the conditions of the Russian provincial mental asylums. He took particular interest in the conditions of the mentally ill during his research trip to the island of Sakhalin, as well as getting to know the famous psychiatrist Vladimir I. Iakovenko, the founder of the best psychiatric hospital in Russia at the end of the nineteenth century.[268]

Given Chekhov's strong interest in the sciences, and in mental pathology in particular, it comes as no surprise that quite a few scholars have explored this dimension of his art. Here I survey those that are most important for my research. In "The Paradox of Melancholy Insight: Reading the Medical Subtext in Chekhov's 'A Boring Story,'" Jefferson Gatrall points out the previous absence of a thorough investigation of the novella's medical subtext and sets out to perform a "balanced comparative analysis of the intersection between medicine, poetics, and

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[266] I.I. Iasinskii, *Roman moei zhizni: Kniga vospominanii* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1926), 268. "Крайне интересуют всякие уклоны так называемой души. Если бы а не сделался писателем, вероятно, из меня вышел бы психиатр."

[267] Tat'iana L. Shchepkina-Kupernik, *Dni moei zhizni: Teatr, Literature, Obshchestvennaia Zhizn'* (Moscow: Federatsiia, 1928), 317.

[268] See sources in note 257; also Margarita Odesskaia, "'Let Them Go Crazy': Madness in the Works of Chekhov," in *Madness and the Mad in Russian Culture,* Angela Brintlinger and Ilya Vinitsky, eds. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 194–98.

epistemology."[269] His goal is not simply to diagnose the main character Nikolai Stepanovich, however, but to reconstruct the historical diagnosis that the character himself would have arrived at (Nikolai Stepanovich never actually shares his diagnostic conclusions with the readers).[270] One of the central concerns of Gatrall's analysis is Nikolai Stepanovich's embodiment of the nineteenth-century mutually exclusive opposition between illness and insight, which the author reads in part in terms of Freudian melancholy.[271] Most significantly, Gatrall articulates two important insights that are eventually investigated by future scholars and are directly relevant to my own work: first, that Chekhov's fiction reflects an opposition between body and mind, as well as physician and patient; and, second, that the author does not just objectively portray illness, but makes it a point to explore its subjective experience as well.[272]

Michael Finke's psycho-biographical study *Seeing Chekhov: Life and Art,* in turn, sheds light on the importance of the author's dual professional identity as a doctor and a writer. Relying on the psychoanalytic lense and on meticulous research, Finke argues that this dual identity, as well as certain aspects of Chekhov's behavior and literary thematic concerns, are rooted in "deep-seated anxieties and desires connected to issues of seeing and being seen, hiding and showing."[273] Casting Chekhov's notorious elusiveness and "autobiographophobia" in new light, Finke argues that the author was heavily invested in his professional identity as a doctor

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[269] Jefferson Gatrall, "The Paradox of Melancholy Insight: Reading the Medical Subtext in Chekhov's 'A Boring Story,'" *Slavic Review* 62:2 (July 2003), 260–61.

[270] Ibid, 260.

[271] Ibid, 274.

[272] Ibid, 263.

[273] Michael C. Finke, *Seeing Chekhov: Life and Art* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 13.

because it allowed him to assume the position of the observer, as opposed to the observed.[274] Finke also dismantles previous assumptions about the lauded objectivity of Chekhov's medical gaze. Instead, his literary analysis demonstrates that Chekhov's personal anxieties about his professional identity influence his fiction, with the "seeing vs. being seen" opposition defining a number of his characters.

In the chapter "Self and Seeing through the Lense of Science," Finke focuses specifically on Chekhov's engagement with the theories of Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer, and Cesare Lombroso, among others, with special emphasis on the author's simultaneous activation and undermining of the discourse of degeneration, as well as biological determinism more generally. Finke points out that Chekhov had a complicated relationship with the theory of degeneration (and, by extension, biological determinism): on the one hand, he retained "considerable critical distance" from it, but, at the same time, "was nonetheless profoundly conditioned by the theory of degeneration, and the ideas underwriting it most certainly continued to have a deep and disquieting resonance for his sense of self."[275] In his analyses of the "Duel" (1891) and "Ward No. Six" (1892), Finke also notes that Chekhov opts for the environmental, as opposed to hereditary, conceptualization of psychopathology, presenting it in a "personal-historical way, rather than a biological-deterministic one."[276]

Last, but not least, Cathy Popkin's work, especially "Restor(y)ing Health: Case History of 'A Nervous Breakdown,'" also explores the importance of Chekhov's engagement with

[274] Ibid, 198.

[275] Ibid, 105.

[276] Ibid, 115 and 119.

professional medical knowledge for his fiction. Although Popkin's piece focuses primarily on "A Nervous Breakdown" (1889), many of her arguments, similarly to those of Gatrall, apply to Chekhov's corpus as a whole. She reads Chekhov's story as a "revisionary case history" that functions as a corrective to the psychiatric (specifically hysterical) case histories of the late nineteenth century.[277] Popkin investigates Chekhov's exploration of the troubled "form-giving through sense-making" endeavor in the story, as both the main character Vasil'ev and we, as the readers, struggle to make sense of another's pain.[278] According to Popkin, through the juxtaposition of various forms of institutional and professional knowledge, Chekhov both portrays and counteracts the "sever[ing of] intellectual proficiency from direct knowledge," as well as the "obliteration of subjectivity of [one's] object of knowledge."[279]

The surveyed criticism contains a number of common thematic threads, which I use as a foundation for my own work and on which I in turn build. The importance of Chekhov's professional knowledge and identity for his work; his troubled relationship with biological determinism in perspectives on disease; as well as his insistence on the need to (re)introduce empathy into investigations of illness (in both medical and literary arenas), thus restoring the subjectivity of the "object" of investigation, are all central to my own inquiries. However, whereas previous critics' explorations of biological determinism and illness are in large part

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[277] Cathy Popkin, "Restor(y)ing Health: Case History of 'A Nervous Breakdown,'" in *Anton Pavlovich Chekhov: Poetics, Hermeneutics, Thematics,* Clayton J. Douglas, ed. (Ottawa, ON: Slavic Research Group at the University of Ottawa, 2006), 113 and 117. For Popkin's additional work on hysteria case histories, see her "Hysterical Episodes: Case Histories and Silent Subjects," in *Self and Story in Russian History,* Laura Engelstein and Stephanie Sandler, eds. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 189–217.

[278] Popkin, "Restor(y)ing Health," 108 and 118.

[279] Ibid, 108 and 111.

connected to the hereditary predisposition inherent to both (as in nervously-based diabetes for Gatrall, degeneration for Finke, and hysteria for Popkin),[280] I am interested primarily in the discourses surrounding neurasthenia and nervous depletion specifically.

Although degeneration and biological determinism play a major role in neurasthenia as well (since, in the Russian and European contexts, the illness always implicates future generations and the nation as a whole), there is a major difference: whereas, previously, hereditary predisposition was seen as the single major factor in one's susceptibility to nervous illness, neurasthenia, by contrast, now endangers even those without "faulty" heredity. To be sure, those with hereditary predispositions and already weakened nervous systems will succumb sooner than their healthy counterparts. The sensationalism associated with neurasthenia, however, is in large part connected to the very fact that the civilized world itself is now seen as the threat to *previously healthy* nerves, if proper nervous energy balance is not scrupulously maintained by the individual. It is this very generalization of illness, as well as the attendant sensationalism and even paranoia about its omnipresent threat — with healthy bodies and minds in constant danger of possible future illness — that I turn to in this chapter.

The Hero of Our Time Unmasked: Ivanov as a Subverted Literary Type

Often considered one of Chekhov's less mature and ultimately unsuccessful plays, *Ivanov* focuses on a title character who, as already mentioned, can be claimed as a familiar type by either of the two discourses. The plot revolves around Nikolai Ivanov, a formerly robust,

[280] Popkin's investigation of hysteria is not limited to its neurological models; as she notes, nearing fin-de-siècle, theories of hysteria begin to be influenced by the introduction of theories of its psychical etiology (although in the 1880s, Russian theories are still largely dominated by the neurological model). "Restor(y)ing Health," 113–14.

energetic, politically and socially involved nobleman, who suddenly finds himself exhausted, irritable, apathetic, and at times uncharacteristically cruel. He has lost his taste for life and torments himself with unanswerable questions as to the reasons behind his mental decline. Having married for love five years prior, Ivanov now finds himself unable to provide support or affection for his wife Anna Petrovna, who is dying of tuberculosis. In marrying Ivanov, Anna Petrovna, formerly Sarra, had converted to Orthodoxy from Judaism and was disowned by her family as a result. Alone and desperate, she longs for the affection of the man she fell in love with, whereas Ivanov himself finds it difficult to be around her. He is no longer the man Anna Petrovna knew and he himself is now haunted by the knowledge of this fact.

In the meantime, Ivanov finds himself attracted to the twenty-year-old Sasha, an energetic believer in "active love," who is determined to rescue him from his emotional decline. Doctor L'vov, Anna Petrovna's physician, completes the major cast. L'vov struggles with his own feelings of anger and disbelief, as he repeatedly attempts to convince Ivanov not to torture his wife with his interactions with Sasha and to allow her to die in peaceful ignorance — all requests Ivanov ultimately fails to heed. In the final scene, with Anna Petrovna dead for a year and Sasha and Ivanov about to get married, L'vov publicly confronts Nikolai and accuses him of being a "scoundrel."[281] Ivanov calmly thanks him and proceeds to shoot himself on stage.

As Richard Gilman and John McKellor Reid have noted, Ivanov's description as an educated, enigmatic, talented man, who is nonetheless not utilized, and even "victimized," by his social environment, immediately marks him as a Russian "superfluous man" (*lishnii*

[281] *Pss,* 12:75. Original: "подлец."

chelovek).[282] Indeed, Ivanov has returned to the stagnant provinces and is unable to fit into his environment, pining away and eventually self-destructing. From Pushkin's Onegin and Lermontov's Pechorin, to Goncharov's Oblomov and many of Turgenev's characters, this Russian literary type, particularly popular in the 1840s and 1850s, had already become a well-worn, yet nonetheless still prevalent cliché by the time Chekhov wrote his play. These romanticized social misfits tended to elude the maturity associated with full adulthood and were often presented to the readers as confined to stormy youth, if not perpetual adolescence. As a rule, they never experienced the complications associated with full adult and complex relationships. Romantic happiness eluded them, with passion dissipating and the relationship itself inevitably falling apart.

Nikolai Ivanov indeed fits on many of these counts, and Chekhov's activation of this well-known stereotype, predictably, resulted in contemporaneous critics' immediate attempts to explain the title character exclusively as such a type. Representatively, for example, a regular literary observer for the the newspaper *Saratov daily* (*Saratovskii dnevnik*), passionately argued that Chekhov masterfully portrayed "the contemporary mental state of the Russian *intelligent* […] as well as the consequences resulting from the collision of his ideals with contemporary Russian reality," adding even more ardently, "But, I repeat, the social conditions amid which the educated Russian man is forced to learn the science of social life, this lonely struggle, without

[282] Richard Gilman, "*Ivanov:* Prologue to a Revolution," *Theater* 22:2 (1991), 14–27; John McKellor Reid, "*Ivanov:* The Perils of Typicality," *Modern Drama* 49:1 (2006), 76–97.

support, without preparation for it — that is the backbreaking burden that overstrains the power of Ivanovs and forces them to perish before their time."[283]

And yet Chekhov conveyed the core characteristics of this type, while simultaneously transcending it and thus baffling his readers' expectations. The new love affair is never really given stage time, as the plot skips almost immediately from Sasha and Nikolai's confessions of affection to their pre-wedding conversation about breaking things off, ultimately to end in Ivanov's sudden suicide. The idea that negative social conditions alone victimize the superfluous men by failing to present them with opportunities for self-actualization is mentioned as a possible explanation for Ivanov's state of mind, yet quickly dismissed as yet another outdated cliché. Ivanov's friend and Sasha's father Lebedin, for example, at one point suggests that Nikolai "has been eaten up by his environment," with the latter only to respond curtly with, "It's silly, Pasha. And old."[284]

Chekhov ultimately encapsulates the core of the "superfluous man" type, while at the same time insisting that the main character cannot be *explained away* as such. Chekhov wrote to his brother about *Ivanov,* "I wanted to be original. I did not portray a single villain or a single angel…did not blame anyone or exculpate anyone," at another point insisting, "I've created a

[283] V., "Literaturnye ocherki," *Saratovskii dnevnik* 75 (5 April 1889). "Современное душевное настроение русского интеллигентного человека […] и те последствия, которые являются результатом столкновения его идеалов с современной русской действительностью." "Но, повторяем, те общественные условия, среди которых интеллигентному русскому человеку приходится проходить науку общественной жизни, эта борьба 'в одиночку,' без поддержки, без подготовки к ней – вот то непосильное бремя, которое надрывает силы Ивановых, заставляет их безвременно гибнуть."

[284] *Pss,* 12: 52. "Глупо, Паша, и старо."

type of some literary importance."[285] Gilman points out that as a result of absent villains and heroes in the play the dimension of moral judgment in the work is eliminated.[286] Indeed, Ivanov is not a positive protagonist, nor a straightforward antagonist, despite his morally objectionable actions towards his terminally ill wife. The same goes for his double Doctor L'vov, an educated and seemingly highly principled man, who nonetheless also turns out to be self-righteous, emotionally volatile, and, ultimately, incompetent as Ivanov's potential healer.

And yet, Chekhov's simultaneous activation and undermining of the "superfluous man" type functions as more than a portrayal of the dangers of reading people as "types," as both Gilman and Reid would have it. Both Chekhov's activation of the stereotype and the contemporaneous critics' reaction to it highlight another important circumstance: the theories surrounding environmental determinism and the popularized neurological explanations of neurasthenia strangely converge, as the mechanism through which neurasthenia has the potential to undermine a heretofore healthy organism reinforces the environmental theories of social determinism, providing it with "hard" scientific backing in the popular imagination.

Not only does Chekhov subvert the "superfluous man" or the "Russian Hamlet" literary types by presenting (according to some overly) realistic human story behind them, however, but he also dares to open the door to questioning literature's concern with its dominant mission of social reform and national moral health. At one point, for example, Ivanov advises Doctor L'vov, from the alleged wisdom of his supposedly advanced age:

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[285] *Pss (Pis'ma),* 2: 137–38. Letter to brother Aleksandr (24 October 1887); Lidiia D. Gromova, ed., *Letopis' zhizni i tvorchestva A.P. Chekhova* (Moscow: Nasledie, 2000), 339.

[286] Gilman, 19.

> "Do not marry Jewesses, psychopaths, or blue stockings, but choose something ordinary, greyish, without bright colors, without excessive sounds. Actually, build your entire life as if by a template. The greyer and more monotonous the background, the better. Dear friend, do not wage war against thousands by yourself, do not battle windmills, do not beat your forehead against walls… May god protect you from various rational enterprises [*ratsional'nykh khoziaistv*], unusual schools, passionate speeches. Lock yourself away in your small shell and carry on your small, god-given affairs. It's warmer, more honest, and healthier that way.[287]

Ivanov's speech delivers a resounding rejection of the reform-oriented ideals inherited from the 1860s, a fact to which the populist and the democratically oriented contemporaneous critics of the play reacted angrily and indignantly. Gleb Uspenskii's piece in the *Russian Thought* (*Russkaia mysl'*), for example, was representative of such responses to the play. Uspenskii describes Ivanov as a "renegade," who had betrayed the high ideals of the 1860s. Furthermore, he characterizes him as a "living corpse," who not only turned his back on past convictions, but also represents a prime example of someone leading a "meaningless existence" and "unconscious

[287] *Pss,* 12: 16–17. "Не женитесь вы ни на еврейках, ни на психопатках, ни на синих чулках, а выбирайте себе что-нибудь заурядное, серенькое, без ярких красок, без лишних звуков. Вообще всю жизнь стройте по шаблону. Чем серее и монотоннее фон, тем лучше. Голубчик, не воюйте вы в одиночку с тысячами, не сражайтесь с мельницами, не бейтесь лбом о стены… Да хранит вас бог от всевозможных рациональных хозяйств, необыкновенных школ, горячих речей… Запритесь себе в свою раковину и делайте свое маленькое, богом данное дело… Это теплее, честнее и здоровее."

life" while in a "hypnotic sleep."[288] Although somewhat reductive in his judgments, Uspenskii is not wrong either, as the passage does speak directly against the call to social action articulated in Chernyshevsky's earlier description of the importance and function of Russian literature. Instead of trying to improve unhealthy social conditions that ultimately undermine the national psychic and moral health, Ivanov calls the stereotypical Populist L'vov to accept the givens, not to go against the grain, and to avoid anything outside the existent norm.

Although sounding rather absurd as advice given to a reform-minded nineteenth-century Russian intellectual, the passage is in fact a point-by-point textbook version of late nineteenth-century scientific recommendations on psychic health. This advice could be found in any major book on nervous pathology, or, more specifically, on conditions on the so-called shock spectrum we have been exploring. Ironically, the content of Ivanov's speech also makes for the most boring literary plot imaginable, as if to allege that these mental health guidelines are the sole province of science and cannot possibly be represented in the literary domain.

The Hero with Cracked Spine: Ivanov the Neurasthenic

Throughout the play, Ivanov fruitlessly and repeatedly wonders, "What is the matter with me? Into what sort of abyss am I pushing myself? Where does my weakness come from? What happened to my nerves?"[289] Given the language, it comes as no surprise that both contemporary and present-day critics also tend(ed) to read the title character as suffering from some type of

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[288] Gleb Uspenskii, "O tom, chto natvorila akusherka Anna Petrovna," *Russkaia mysl'* 4 (1889), 146–66. Original phrases, in order: "ренегат," "живой труп," "бессмысленного существования," "бессознательной жизни," "в гипнотическом сне."

[289] *Pss,* 12: 51, 53. "Что со мною?" "Что же со мною? В какую пропасть толкаю я себя? Откуда во мне эта слабость? Что стало с моими нервами?"

nervous disease. A brief survey of present-day criticism, for example, reveals writings on representations of stress syndrome, depression, and other neuro-chemical disorders in the play.[290] In the first production of the Moscow Art Theater in October 1904, in turn, Vasilii Kachalov played Ivanov as a neurasthenic,[291] whereas, in 1976, Innokentii Smoktunovskii played him as suffering from clinical depression.[292] Readers and critics contemporary to the play itself, in turn, saw Ivanov as yet another type: the representative of the so-called "Nervous Age," or the neurasthenic specifically of the late nineteenth century. A critic for a Simferopol' newspaper, for example, wrote:

> Ivanov is a completely new type, created by modern life conditions and for the first time placed on stage by Chekhov. […] Such people, tired of living, broken and overstrained, are known by all of us, and these peculiarities received perhaps most vivid expression […] and in this sense, Ivanov may have a right to be noted as a literary type."[293]

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[290] Walter Smyrniw argues that Chekhov in part foresaw Hans Selye's "discovery" of the stress syndrom in 1936 through his accurate portrayal of the disorder in the play. "Chekhov's Depiction of Human Stress: The Case of Nikolai Ivanov," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 34:4 (1992), 413–18. Bradley Lewis argues for the play's relevance to discussions of present-day treatments of depression, including the overwhelming trend towards chemical intervention through antidepressants. "Listening to Chekhov: Narrative Approaches to Depression," *Literature and Medicine* 25:1 (2006), 46–71.

[291] Martin Banham, ed., *The Cambridge Guide to Theatre* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 584.

[292] Vera Gottlieb, *The Cambridge Companion to Chekhov* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 254.

[293] Fel'etov, *Teatr-Krym* 60 (24 May 1889). "Иванов – совершенно новый тип, созданный современными условиями жизни и впервые выведенный на сцену Чеховым […] Таких людей, уставших жить, надломленных и надорванных, всякий из нас знает, и в Иванове

Later literary analyses that acknowledge the role of neurasthenia in the play tend to do so in passing and often with an implicit one-directional diagnostic move: the medical criteria for neurasthenia, as well as Ivanov's meeting of them, are acknowledged, but their implications are not explored in detail.[294] Nineteenth-century reviews, like the one above, in contrast, acknowledge neurasthenia's significance not only as a diagnostic criterium, but as a widely spread, popularly understood cultural metaphor, as well. Even these nineteenth-century reviews, however, have a rather limited scope, with judgments pronounced from within the cultural period itself and missing the benefit of analytical hindsight afforded by passing time.

On Neurasthenia's "Discoursive Heterogeneity and Semiotic Vagrancy"[295]

As already established, by the last quarter of the nineteenth century, neurasthenia not only had swept over the scientific communities of America, Europe, and Russia, but also had rapidly taken over the imaginations of their respective societies as well. Susan K. Morrisey's analysis of late nineteenth-century Russian medical advice literature and of advertisements related to health, for example, demonstrates an overwhelming general concern about the health and strength of one's nerves and about nourishing and replenishing one's nervous system more

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все эти особенности получили, может быть, самое яркое выражение […] и в этом смысле Иванов, может быть, имеет право быть отмеченным как литературный тип."

[294] See Reid, "*Ivanov:* The Perils of Typicality," 80–81 and John Tulloch, *Chekhov: A Structuralist Study* (Totowa, N.J.: Barnes and Noble Books, 1980), 7–8.

[295] This is Tom Lutz's phrase in his *American nervousness, 1903: An Anecdotal History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 23. Echoing similar sentiment a century earlier, Pavel I. Kovalevskii described neurasthenia as "a most propitious canvas on which the patterns and pictures of all kinds of illnesses might be inscribed." *Ioann Groznyi i ego dushevnoe sostoianie (Eskizy iz istorii)* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia M.I. Akinfieva and I.V. Leont'eva, 1901), 47.

generally.[296] As Morrissey notes, neurasthenia in Russia by this time was popularly understood as "epidemic, fashionable, and rapidly spreading through all social groups."[297]

When the American neuropathologist George Beard first introduced neurasthenia in his 1869 article in the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal,* he defined it as an illness characterized by the depletion of "nervous force"[298] that subsequently gave rise to a diverse range of symptoms, including dyspepsia, insomnia, headaches, neuralgia […] among others.[299] The list of the symptoms soon grew increasingly extensive and ultimately unwieldy, however. Neurasthenia's causes, in turn, were thought to include "hereditary factors, the demands of modern life more generally, and poor lifestyle choices, especially in the domains of sexuality and leisure; [whereas…] its therapy […] required rational and hygienic lifestyles, mental composure, and emotional self-regulation."[300] In effect, neurasthenia became viewed as a "gateway illness" characterized by the general weakening of the nervous system that in turn ushered in numerous other manifestations of nervous pathology. This new generalization and malleability of the disease does not escape commentary in Chekhov's play.

Similarly to all the other characters in the work, Ivanov himself expresses opinions as to the possible causes of his mental state, which range from plain laziness and a weakness of will,

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[296] Morrissey, 645–48.

[297] Ibid, 661.

[298] Beard, "Neurasthenia, or Nervous Exhaustion," 217.

[299] Beard, *A Practical Treatise on Nervous Exhaustion,* 109.

[300] Morrissey, 661.

to neursathenic-like exhaustion and overstrain. In a detailed confession to his friend Lebedev, Ivanov shares:

> "I had a worker, Semen. One time, during grain threshing, he decided to show off his strength in front of the young women. He threw two sacks of rye onto his back and overstrained himself. Died soon after. I think I too have overstrained myself. School, university, then the estate work, local schools and projects… I believed differently from everyone, got married differently. I used to get agitated and took risks. As you know, I threw my money left and right. I felt happy and suffered more than anyone around here. All of these […] are my sacks… I have thrown them on my back and am carrying them around, but my spine is cracked. At twenty, we're all already heroes, trying our hand at everything, capable of anything, and at thirty, we're exhausted, good for nothing."[301]

The passage includes a curious contradictory mixture of both insisting on Ivanov's difference from the rest ("I believed differently from everyone, got married differently," etc.) and a simultaneous generalization and extension of his own condition to everyone else ("At twenty, we're all already heroes, […] and at thirty, we're exhausted, good for nothing"). Indeed, even Ivanov's name, the most common surname in Russia, implies that, although each story, each case of nervousness, is individual in its specific circumstances and details, the general pattern holds.

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[301] *Pss,* 12: 52. "У меня был рабочий Семен, которого ты помнишь. Раз, во время молотьбы, он захотел похвастать перед девками своею силой, взвалил себе на спину два мешка ржи и надорвался. Умер скоро. Мне кажется, что я тоже надорвался. Гимназия, университет, потом хозяйство, школы, проекты… Веровал я не так, как все, женился не так, как все, горячился, рисковал, деньги свои, сам знаешь, бросал направо и налево, был счастлив и страдал, как никто во всем уезде. Все это, Паша, мои мешки… Взвалил себе на спину ношу, а спина-то и треснула. В двадцать лет мы все уже герои, за всё беремся, всё можем, и к тридцати уже утомляемся, никуда не годимся."

In addition, the passage encapsulates Ivanov's condition through an extended metaphor for overstrain, as well as conveying the core differences between neurasthenia's original American prototype and its specifically Russian variant. Although Beard defined neurasthenia as an illness of modernity, a marker of civilization, and a specifically American one at that,[302] we saw that European and Russian scientists had added their own dimensions to the construct. In addition to accepting Beard's conceptualization of neurasthenia specifically as a response to the shocks of modern life, they also combined it with theories of degeneration. As we already saw, degeneration always carries with it the specter of the threat to the nation's evolutionary biological pool and future survival. In the play, for example, Ivanov counters Sasha's professions of love and desire to help him by telling her, only half-jokingly, "Good thing Darwin doesn't know about this; otherwise, he'd let you have it! You're degrading the future human stock. If you'd have your way, only whiners and psychopaths would be born."[303] In addition, we have another reference to neurasthenia's associations with degeneration in Ivanov's reference to the fact that he "married differently." On the one hand, the phrase no doubt refers to the negative social consequences of Ivanov's marriage to Anna Petrovna, whose Jewish ethnic identity does not go unremarked on by the Russian gentry in the play, despite her costly conversion to

[302] Interestingly, Beard identified Slavs and Jews as two groups that had a very low susceptibility to neurasthenia — the Jews, supposedly because of their overall strength, and the Slavs, because they were not "civilized enough" and thus were not affected by the perils of modernity. George M. Beard, *American Nervousness: Its Causes and Consequences* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1881), 172; Beard, *A Practical Treatise on Nervous Exhaustion (Neurasthenia),* 2.

[303] *Pss,* 12: 58. "Не знает об этом Дарвин, а то бы он задал вам на орехи! Вы портите человеческую породу. По вашей милости на свете скоро будут рождаться одни только нытики и психопаты."

Orthodoxy.[304] At the same time, however, the phrase also echoes Ivanov's earlier advice to L'vov "not to marry Jewesses," whom he places in the same category as "psychopaths" and "blue-stockings." All three are categories designated by the mental sciences of the time as highly degenerate and thus a danger to the health of future generations.

In addition to references to heredity, however, we also have an explicit metaphor for the new source of pathology: nervous depletion of possibly healthy nerves. Ivanov's description of "thr[owing] money left and right" mirrors the mechanism of the economic depletion of one's nervous force. Thus, Ivanov's financial ruin parallels his "bankruptcy" of nervous energy as well, with both pointing to the same problem: his careless spending and lack of keeping "proper accounts." The advice for meticulous planning Ivanov gives to L'vov earlier now takes on new meaning. His encouragement to live "as if by a template" refers to the medical advice of the time aimed at avoiding overstrain and replenishing one's nervous force by keeping careful track of one's energy levels. The high stakes at hand, signaled by nervous (and financial) "bankruptcy" in the previous passage, are made explicit in Ivanov's advice as well. He tells L'vov, "do not wage war against thousands by yourself, do not battle windmills." On the one hand, this pronouncement refers to the overwhelming, "backwards" Russian social conditions faced by the reform-minded *intelligent.* The second passage, for example, refers to this source of nervous strain as well, also making explicit the class differentiation inherent in neurasthenia's Russian etiology: the stark division between the *intellectual* strain of the Russian *intelligent* on the one hand and the *physical* overstrain of the peasant classes on the other. At the same time, however, the advice also explicitly situates the active reformer as an outdated product of a long-gone era.

[304] For a discussion of the "Jewish question" and its relevance both to the play and Chekhov's biography, see Helena Tolstoy's "From Susanna to Sarra: Chekhov in 1886–1887," *Slavic Review* 50: 3 (1991), 590–600.

The phrase "battl[ing] windmills," for example, clearly refers to Don Quixote, with the overall message emphasizing the "inappropriateness" of the reformers' actions and their need to adapt to a new era or otherwise perish in the process.

Ivanov's self-diagnosis echoes earlier assessments of the Russian intellectual's isolated, diseased state from both the literary sources about a decade before the play's creation and from the popularly spread scientific beliefs about the neurasthenic Russian national character contemporary to the play itself. Pavel Annenkov, for example, echoes Ivanov's dominant metaphor of a broken spine, asserting that, with a few rare exceptions, the whole country "might exist entirely of people with shattered nerves, without a single person endowed with a healthy spinal column."[305] The nineteenth-century German psychiatrist Rudolf Arndt, in turn, echoes both Chekhov's and Ivanov's diagnosis of the Russian "nervous" national type, stating, "nowhere does a person exhaust himself as quickly" as in Russia, adding that "a Russian can lead a battalion at eighteen, undertake a murder investigation at twenty, decide the fate of millions and the interests of the state at twenty-five, but at forty or fifty, when the Europeans are in their prime, a Russian is already old and useless."[306]

And yet, despite the accuracy of Chekhov's depiction of the cultural and medical neurasthenic in the play, he, once again, manages both to acknowledge the usefulness of this type, while simultaneously insisting that it too cannot fully explain Ivanov. The various characters that draw on literary and philosophical cultural tropes in the play project their

[305] Annenkov, 155.

[306] Rudolf Arndt, *Die Neurasthenie (Nervenschwäche) ihr Wesen, ihre Bedeutung und Behandlung vom anatomisch-physiologischen Standpunkte, für Aerzte und Studirende* (Vienna: Urban and Schwarzenberg, 1885), 25.

preconceived notions of Ivanov's condition onto him, failing to register his individuality and witness his suffering without judgment. Similarly, medicine proves largely useless and ultimately harmful to Ivanov, eventually contributing to his death. Doctor L'vov projects his populist zeal onto his potential patient, unable to witness him either objectively or empathically. For his own part, Ivanov criticizes what he takes to be the doctor's reductive, materialist approach to human suffering, in one of the most memorable speeches of the play:

> "How simple and easy… Man is such a simple and uncomplicated machine… No, doctor, in each of us there are too many wheels, screws, and valves for us to be able to make judgments about one another based on a first impression or on two or three external signs. I do not understand you, you do not understand me, and we do not understand ourselves. One can be a wonderful doctor — and at the same time not know people at all."[307]

First and foremost, the passage criticizes the separation of professional knowledge from lived, felt experience that Popkin argued about earlier. Furthermore, through its caricature of positivist science, it also delivers a resounding critique of reducing internal experience and illness to legible external, surface signs that Finke discusses in his work. The passage also presents a wonderful, concise encapsulation of a trope so prevalent in Chekhov's work and noted by many in the past: miscommunication and lack of understanding, not only of others, but of oneself as well.

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[307] *Pss,* 12: 54–56. "Как просто и несложно… Человек такая простая и немудреная машина… Нет, доктор, в каждом из нас слишком много колес, винтов и клапанов, чтобы мы могли судить друг о друге по первому впечатлению или по двум-трем внешним признакам. Я не понимаю вас, вы меня не понимаете, и сами мы себя не понимаем. Можно быть прекрасным врачом — и в то же время совсем не знать людей."

Although Ivanov's speech represents a caricature of what by this point would be seen as reductive, crude materialism, the fact that he delivers his pronouncements from within this imitation of the scientific perspective is telling and indicative of a larger trend in the work. As the play progresses, we see that the interactions between Ivanov and L'vov take on a strange quality, as they often reverse roles: Ivanov repeatedly lists his various symptoms, at times even diagnosing himself, whereas L'vov fails to help his potential patient and is consumed by his unbridled emotions instead. Thus, we see the familiar types of the two competing discourses — the superfluous man from the literary and the doctor from the medical domains — strangely "bleeding into" one another, taking on each other's characteristics, but in an imperfect way. This "cross-contamination" of the two competing, yet imitative characters, mirrors the simultaneous competition and mutual referentiality of the literary and the scientific discourses illustrated in the cultural and medical evolution of neurasthenia.

Thus, Chekhov asserts two important things in his play: First, that in their zealous missions to diagnose and cure the Russians and the country as a whole, both literary and scientific discourses become blinded by their own preconceived templates. Both discourses contain truths important for the psychic health of the nation, but not if they fail to approach each case individually and become blinded by their own fossilized tenets. Ultimately, Chekhov does create a new national type: one that encapsulates the leading types of its day, while simultaneously resisting being stripped of individuality and being reduced to an easily applied template. Chekhov insists in the play that his teacher Zakhar'in's call for approaching each case of suffering on an individual basis is central to the challenges faced by both the literary and the scientific discourses. In a truly objective spirit of the sciences, one should see what is in front of her, without relying exclusively on preconceived notions. At the same time, that objective seeing

should necessarily be supplemented by the empathic witnessing of the individual's interiority, a task particularly well suited for literature.

Chekhov's second assertion is even more important, however. Pointing out the "cross-contamination" between literature and the sciences, the author demonstrates the dangers of this mutual referentiality, as well as of generalization of nervous pathology more broadly.[308] Literature initially made way for the popularization of neurasthenia as a medical condition and even influenced the shape the medical theories took. The medical theories themselves, however, later began to feed into literary tropes. The popularized versions of both discourses became mired in preconceived notions and clichés, with the latter repeatedly borrowed by both discourses from one another. Thus, the play points out that cultural and scientific clichés, especially when the two discourses do not provide healthy correctives to one another and start to mirror each other instead, represent the real danger that individuals should guard themselves against. Chekhov does not offer a cure for Ivanov's condition, but he does demonstrate how the character's suffering becomes compounded by medicine and art — the very discourses that should provide him with aid and comfort. Ivanov never has a chance for relief, much less a cure, because everyone around him (himself included) is too busy imitating art and espousing popularized scientific doctrines, both of which, at a certain point, in turn, imitate each other.

[308] Chekhov's own views on nervousness and neurasthenia were marked by similar ambivalence, and at times aversion, that Finke points out in the author's relationship with the theory of degeneration. *Seeing Chekhov,* 99–100. In addition to Chekhov's ironic reference to the "nervous perils" of civilization, included in the epigraph to this chapter, he, for example, expressed another representative opinion about the "Nervous Age" in a letter to A.S. Suvorin. Chekhov writes, "зачем же Вы говорите о "нашем нервном веке"? Ей-богу, никакого нет нервного века. Как жили люди, так и живут, и ничем теперешние нервы не хуже нервов Авраама, Исаака и Иакова." (13 December 1891).

Thus, whereas Dostoevsky concerns himself largely with unconscious aspects of psychic injury, Chekhov highlights pathology that can very well be accompanied by "too much consciousness" and self-awareness. Both Kornilova and Alesha, for example, are physically "high-jacked" by their psychically injurious experiences, but Ivanov is perfectly aware of his own symptoms and has no problem self-diagnosing. This self-awareness, however, provides no relief from his symptoms and in fact exacerbates his suffering. Ultimately, the role of the unconscious in psychic injury becomes oddly supplanted in the play. As we go from the 1870s into the 1880s then, psychic injury appears to become conceptualized as much more chronic in nature. Whereas the earlier decade is still concerned with psychic wounds that lead to sudden, unconscious outbursts that compromise or suspend the individual's will, the 1880s see a theorization of nervous illness that now permeates one's very outlook on life and colors every minute of one's existence. Thus, instead of being faced with intense, yet temporary, "high-jackings" of consciousness, Chekhov's sufferer faces a slow, but steady take-over of one's daily sense of wellbeing and emotions.

Both Dostoevsky and Chekhov resist the biological and environmental determinism predominant in scientific theories of psychic injury contemporary to their time. Whereas Dostoevsky often explicitly argues in favor of free will and possibilities of future redemption, however, Chekhov uses indirect means to lead the reader to rebel against said determinism. To do so, he creates a world in which everyone else absurdly embraces predetermined outcome scenarios, be they borrowed from literary or scientific templates. This very absence of original thought and failure to exercise one's free will in the play, leads the reader to reject a similar path.

Finally, whereas Dostoevsky is heavily concerned with issues of heredity when it comes to psychic injury, resisting the determinist verdicts of the materialist sciences of his day, Chekhov highlights the problematic overgeneralization of nervous illness by the 1880s instead. Without denying neurasthenia's existence, Chekhov nonetheless poignantly forces the reader to reflect on what meaning psychic injury might retain in a world in which the simple acts of modern daily life supposedly threaten everyone with a possible nervous decline and life-long illness.

CONCLUSION

Predictably, the arrival of the twentieth century, and of the Soviet period in particular, ushered in many changes: in terms of scientific views on the psyche and its physiological basis; in the social role of mental scientists and specifically psychiatrists; as well as in the connection of Russian sciences of the mind to their western counterparts. Despite all the differences, however, what is surprising is the extent to which Soviet mental sciences also sustained an underlying theoretical continuity that ultimately stemmed from nineteenth-century theories. This enduring scientific legacy manifested itself primarily in Soviet privileging of the body in mental phenomena. For example, the eventually dominant Pavlovian neurological doctrine on the mind viewed the psyche almost exclusively through the prism of "conditioned reflex activity," claiming that psychological processes and disorders arose as a result of "the interaction of processes of excitation and inhibition in the cortex."[309]

Mikhail Bulgakov's novella *A Heart of a Dog* (1924) both illustrates and in part foresees many of the historical and theoretical continuities and breaks in the world of the Soviet mental sciences. Throughout, the novella sets up a series of revealing oppositions: between the heart and the brain, heredity ("nature") and education ("nurture"), as well as the doctor/scientist and the (ideological) state. The opposition between the heart and the brain illustrates the move towards the comparatively greater privileging of the brain, as opposed to the nervous system, in the Soviet tradition. The "heart/brain" opposition was frequently employed in the nineteenth century, as the titles of representative lectures by the physiologists Claude Bernard and George Henry Lewes (translated for the popular Russian audience) indicate: "The Physiology of the Heart and

[309] B.M. Segal, "The Theoretical Bases of Soviet Psychiatry," *American Journal of Psychotherapy* 29:4 (October 1975), 513.

Its Relationship to the Brain"[310] and "The Heart and the Brain,"[311] respectively. This binary was so prevalent in scientific discussions, as well as in their popularizations for the public, because by the second half of the nineteenth century, the heart was often used as shorthand for the nervous system as a whole, which was in turn frequently placed in opposition with the brain in discussions of consciousness. In the mentioned lecture, for example, Lewes explicitly identifies the heart broadly as the nervous system at large, excluding the brain.[312]

Thus, the usage of the opposition between the heart and the brain in the novella immediately hearkens to the nineteenth-century scientific tradition, but, simultaneously, also conveys significant deviations from it. Whereas in the nineteenth century, as we already saw, the nervous system had been given quite a bit of independence from the brain, with nervous cells possessing forms of consciousness and even memory, the twentieth century heavily privileges the brain instead. This emphasis in the novella is representative of a sustained trend in the later Soviet mental sciences. Thus, although the latter discourse retains a strong connection to the physiological tradition of the nineteenth century, theories of nervous or "organic memory" now become erased. In the novella, for example, Doctor Preobrazhenskii transforms the dog Sharik into the man Sharikov by surgically transplanting the pituitary gland from the brain of the latter into the brain of the former. As a result, the whole body of the dog (including the original canine brain) becomes transformed into human shape. The "organic memory" of the nervous cells

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[310] Klod Bernar, *Fiziologiia serdtsa i otnoshenie ego k golovnomu mozgu: Lektsiia Kloda Bernara, chlena Meditsinskoi Akademii v Parizhe, chitannaia v Sorbonne 27 marta 1865 g.,* trans. Nikolai Solov'ev (St. Petersburg: O.I. Bakst, 1867).

[311] Dzhordzh Genri L'iuis, *Serdtse i mozg,* trans. M. Metsalov (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia Kukolia-Iasnopol'skogo, 1866).

[312] Ibid, 1–5.

associated with Sharik's various physical parts, becomes erased, with the whole body and the heart itself (symbolic of the nervous system as a whole) becoming completely replaced with something that previously did not exist. The "blueprint" for that something, we are told, is contained entirely within a single part of the brain (as well as the testicles). The very last image we see in the work starkly highlights this renewed, strengthened emphasis on the brain, as opposed to the nervous system: through the eyes of Sharik (whose transformation has been reversed), we see the doctor working on an ominous brain in his laboratory.

The second opposition, between one's biology and learned behavior ("nature vs. nurture"), reveals a similar, yet subtly changed relationship with broad nineteenth-century scientific stances. Once again, the emphasis on one's biological inheritance is preserved, but the importance of learned behavior now becomes emphasized as well. Although Sharikov cannot escape his "degenerate" biology (of the street drunkard), agents of the new Soviet state (represented by the Housing Committee and its Chairman Shvonder), now also place emphasis on his education, with the aim to create the "New Soviet Man." Although the novella in large part satirizes these efforts, they are indicative of the future Soviet scientific approaches to human psychology: Pavlovian theories rest largely on a physiological, neurological conception of the mind, and yet the "conditioned reflex" of the brain also plays a pivotal role in determining future human behavior. The novella foreshadows the new Soviet state taking hold of the "conditioning" mechanisms through the employment of its ideology.

Finally, the last opposition, between the doctor/scientist and the new Soviet state, ominously hearkens to much darker developments in the Soviet mental sciences. During the nineteenth century, scientists of the mind, politically, had a fair amount of independence from

the state (or as much of it as you could in an autocracy), with psychiatrists in particular known for their progressive stances, which at times brought them in direct opposition to the government. By contrast, starting with the first half of the twentieth century, psychiatry allied itself with the state. In the novella, Doctor Preobrazhensky resists (and mocks) Shvonder's ideological pressures, but most of the twentieth century saw the two groups represented by these characters working together towards common goals. After World War I and the Revolution, Soviet psychiatry found itself at a critical juncture: the number of traumatized war combatants in need of help overwhelmed the profession, whereas the country's previously-existing mental institutions found themselves in disrepair, with the numbers of earlier patients drastically decreased due to hunger and war-time devastation. At this point, psychiatrist recognized the need for state assistance and centralization, while supporting the belief that state-sponsored mental hygienic prevention represented the best solution to the country's psychological problems.[313]

Thus started the alliance between the scientists of the mind and the state, which, at its worst, brought international notoriety to Soviet Union in the 1970s, with the exposure of its usage of punitive psychiatry on its dissidents and ordinary citizens. Although the 1970s and the 1980s saw the height of this controversy, however, the creation of "special" psychiatric hospitals (under the control of NKVD, as opposed to the Ministry of Health) that employed punitive psychiatry dates back to the 1930s, the time when both Soviet (official) literature and mental sciences saw a complete break with the theories of their western counterparts. The latter, with psychoanalysis and Freudianism in particular, became dismissed as "bourgeois pseudosciences," as well as "reactionary mytholog[ies] calculated to deceive the workers."[314] The practice of

[313] Sirotkina, *Diagnosing Literary Genius,* 146.

psychoanalysis itself, in fact, became prohibited, with most official psychologists and psychiatrists denying the psychoanalytical concepts of repression, sublimation, projection, as well as other protective mechanisms of the ego and the concept of the unconscious altogether. Many Soviet scientists of the mind came to shun personal psychology and restricted their attention to the "safer" areas of schizophrenia, physiology, and psychopharmacology instead, with research focusing almost exclusively on "higher nervous activity."[315]

By the time punitive psychiatry began gaining international attention in the 1970s and 1980s, it was tempting to blame the mistreatment of the "patients" on the "dehumanizing," "depersonalizing" ideology of the Soviet state. Critics focused on the "unthinkable" reduction of living beings to "faulty organisms." As F. Kondrat'ev, the director of the Clinical Department of the V.P. Serbskii State Research Center for Social and Forensic Psychiatry, as well as a practicing psychiatrist in the seventies, shares, writing for a mostly western audience:

> the patient was a faceless, soulless object for investigation of the symptoms and of the pathophysiological mechanisms and biochemical disorders causing them, not a subject experiencing inner distress. Attempts to rise above these "mechanisms" in scientific analysis and practical activity were considered ideologically alien "psychologization."[316]

Although such an approach to treatment is indeed striking in its erasure of the patient's subjectivity, as western critics had charged (and as Chekhov cautioned against a century earlier),

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[314] Segal, 508.

[315] Ibid, 503, 510, and 513.

[316] F. Kondrat'ev, "Soviet Psychiatry," *Russian Social Science Review* 36:6 (November 1995), 87.

it also should sound very familiar after spending time with nineteenth-century views on psychic and nervous pathology. One irony then is that Soviet approaches to treatment were not a "complete aberration" created by the ruthless totalitarian state, but instead were based on nineteenth-century views that were originally imported to Russia from Western Europe. They are in fact the results of taking nineteenth-century materialist approaches to their logical — and dangerous — conclusion. Another irony is that, as the western world is experiencing a resurgence in physiological approaches to the psyche — through the heavily pharmacological approach to treatment of mental disorders, for example, or through cutting-edge research in epigenetics — personality psychology and psychoanalysis began experiencing a renaissance in post–Soviet Russia.[317]

[317] Only with the relatively privileged elites, however.

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